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by FAN NICHOLS

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The Best in Romantic Fiction

NEW LOVE MAGAZINE

25c

PEGGY GRAVES
Editor

VOL. 29 MAY, 1951 NO. 3

Complete Novel

THE ANGRY HEART.....Fan Nichols 16
Even Jon's kisses couldn't convince Eve that he wasn't her bitterest enemy.

Novelettes

DANGEROUS LOVER.....Millie Breece 38
A prim Katherine can change to a loving Kate with a kiss or two from a dashing man.

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. . . whispered Sandy's heart, but her conscience dictated that she stay out of Doug's life.

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Could Carol lock love out of her life—when a man held the key to her heart?

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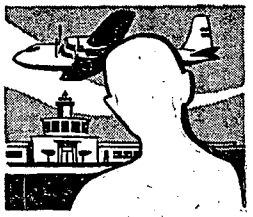

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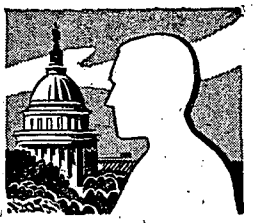

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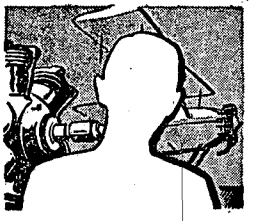

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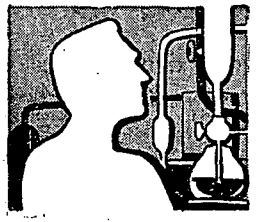

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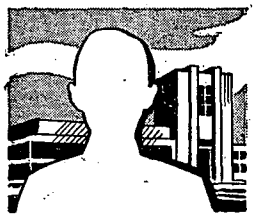

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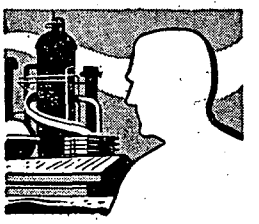

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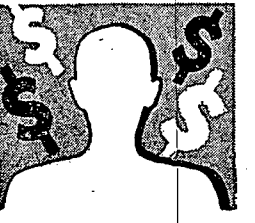

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CELEBRITY CORNER

By THE EDITOR

THIS MONTH CELEBRITY CORNER is letting Millie Breece, one of our favorite writers, speak for herself—and we think you will be as interested in hearing what she has to say as we were:

"I was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. My father was a big red-headed doctor of Scotch-Irish descent, my mother a dark, vivid person who traced her talent for singing to her Welsh ancestors. My childhood was sunny and happy, despite the smoky, gray days outside. One of my earliest recollections was going to sleep to the lullaby of *Il Trovatore* or the sextette from *Lucia.* Another is the thrill of driving over the hills with my father to call on some sick coal miner, and to this day I feel at home in an old-fashioned drug store or any place connected with medicine.

"I played constantly with paper dolls which I cut from an English magazine with a French fashion section, and also with featured love stories very similar to the ones of today. Under my direction the correctly dressed men and women acted dramas, hated and loved, met disaster and overcame it if they were worthy. So began my story making.

"Later I read constantly, starting with *Cinderella*—still my favorite of all stories. Later came everything in the house—the love stories, Scott, Dickens, Balzac, Thackeray, Byron, and my mother read Shakespeare every Sunday evening!

"I learned to read and write at home, since I missed considerable school time because of illness. Convalescing, I wrote my first 'novel' about a blonde Gwendolyn who long since has faded into well-deserved obscurity.

"The happy kind of life ended abruptly with the death of my father, followed five years later by my mother's going. Thus took place the first of the big changes that have characterized my life. Very young I went to different schools, lived with relatives, in time became a school teacher.

"In time too, I had developed an ability to face things, as well as a zest for living. Through it all I think I had two personalities—one that did what there was to do, and the other which always dreamed. The most enduring dream was of becoming a writer. Beautiful words and phrases would come to me—at least I thought they were beautiful and thrilled to them. But except for a few prizes in school for essays, I did no writing.

"Then I married an Eastern young man who possessed all the qualities I lacked—the verve, the ability to get things done, to enjoy reality. At home in the quiet apartment, I began to think again of writing. It was there, having read dozens of love story magazines, I wrote my first story—and sold it. I never saw it in print, but remember the heroine's name, Ruby Roulette.

(Continued on page 114)

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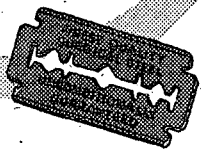

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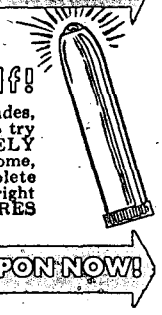

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PIN-UP Beauty Secrets

By LYNNE SVEC

HOW ABOUT SOME back talk? Not the sassy variety that's so short on charm. But the back that's so important in determining your good health—and thusly, your good looks.

The girl with a back ache is liable to feel on the grumpy side—and all too often looks the part. That's where some beauty do's and don't's can come in to save the day.

When your back is in good form, so's your posture, your carriage, your every gesture. Grace, serenity, dignity—all can be yours when your back is in good order, working for your beauty.

Back talk begins with your body lineup, or posture. As a famous Hollywood producer recently said, "There is no such thing as an inferiority complex—just poor posture. If a player walks on the sound set the first day looking sure of herself, the whole picture gets off to a good start. No matter how capable she is, if she LOOKS unsure of herself, she conveys that feeling to the whole crew. It may take hours to undo the harm." If posture is important to a star with a million dollar buildup, it's certainly important to you.

It has also been said of a noted movie actress, as she glided down the aisle to accept the Academy Award, "That gal moves with the grace of a panther!" A supreme compliment, that; for there's marvelous grace to an animal's stride, by dint of its very naturalness.

That's your cue, then—naturalness. And it has to begin with proper body lineup.

In order for you to understand more deeply just how you can go about controlling that mass of muscles, joints, and bones that is you, let's take up each of the following essential parts of the body so far as posture is concerned. Here's how you should stack up:

Feet and Knees: Stand with your feet about two inches apart. Point your toes straight ahead. Each leg and foot should carry half your body weight, with the weight falling just in front of the anklebones. Your knees should be in "easy" position; not so bent that your weight falls on your heels and your body slumps, nor so locked that your derriere protrudes in back and your head juts forward.

Pelvis: A correctly lined up pelvis will make your hips seem inches slimmer. And so it should be tucked under until your back is as straight as you can get it. Practice standing against a wall, with hips folded under you, and see if you can get all of your back to touch the wall. Now step away from the wall, trying to keep your hips and back in the same position they were when against the wall.

Abdomen: As your buttocks muscles tighten when you tuck your hips under, you'll notice that your abdominal muscles contract also. And your reward will be a flatter abdomen to boot. So that as hips go under, abdomen seems to be pulled in.

(Continued on page 112)

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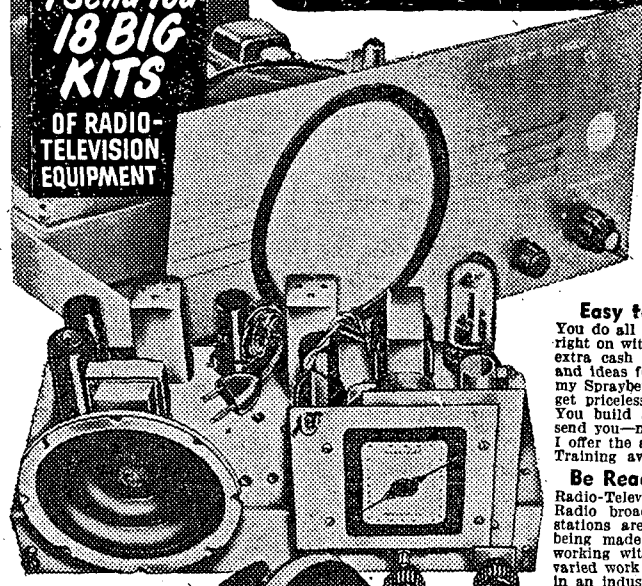
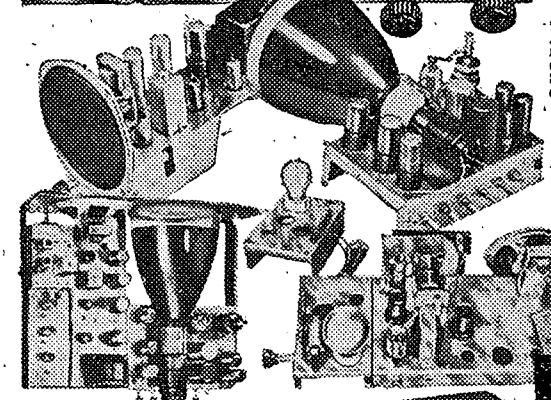
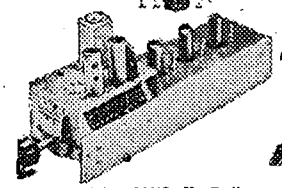
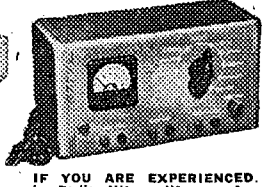
Train at Home in Spare Time for RADIO and TELEVISION









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Your Pen Personality

By Mary Frances

Here is a special and exciting feature, written exclusively for our NEW LOVE readers, by the famous Mary Frances, who will send you a personal analysis of your handwriting. Why not take advantage of this offer today? Simply write to her in care of NEW LOVE MAGAZINE, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y. Send a self-addressed envelope with ten cents, and clip the coupon on page 14.

HERE IT IS, GIRLS—the signature of Hollywood's beautiful, glamorous, sought-after young princess—Elizabeth Taylor, one of the most envied young stars of the cinema world.

How does an eighteen-year-old-girl rate stardom? Maybe her signature will give us a clue.

Large, firm, heavy, dynamic. Students of human nature, who were also non-moviegoers, commented on the maturity of this writing and were astounded to learn that a minor had penned it. They had not associated the tiny feminine star with such a forceful script.

Notice how the "l" seems to be dwarfed by the tremendous capital alongside it. Youthful Miss Taylor has had to bluff her way through more than one situation! Notice too how the signature is joined by the final stroke of the first name and the "T." A joined signature shows a personality which just won't let go, which hangs on, persists and thus doubles the chances at succeeding. And note also how the signature appears to "climb" up the paper. This is the optimistic, cheerful girl one imagines her to be.

If you make a tightly closed "b" as this girl does, you too have much native shrewd-

This large, firm writing comes from the pen of a person who has forged ahead, even through childhood; who has conquered in a few months what others must work at for years. The unusually large capital letters reveal the tremendous pride in one so young, the definite urge to make good, no matter how hard the work might be.

ness. If you bear down heavily on the pen on the down-strokes of many letters you too are forceful in thought and actions. And if you make an "r" definitely pointed on the top there is a goodly share of healthy vanity in your makeup.

This is the signature of a girl who has

(Continued on page 12)

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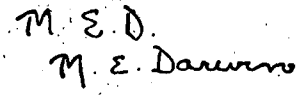
(Continued from page 10)

worked for some years; who has absorbed knowledge and applied it; who has matured beyond her years as a result. She will battle for what she wants, for what she believes in. And that long ending stroke at the close of her signature shows she will be most cautious; that she is wise beyond her years.

Contrast the signature of a "personality" worker with that of a banker. One sells talent, the other sells service. One sells via her personality, the other via his knowledge of stocks, bonds, investments.

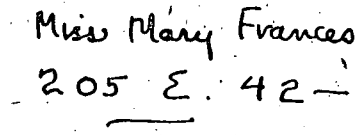


M.E.D. is a mental worker, a chap whose small writing shows his power of concentration; whose clear writing depicts his clarity of thought, his refusal to be muddled; whose very numerals reflect his painstaking demand for accuracy.

Dear Mary Frances:
Why don't you cover the subject of factors which are invisible to the eye, yet have a bearing on handwriting analysis? For example, a margin is a lack of writing, yet undoubtedly has some bearing on handwriting analysis.
Barbara W.

Too wide margins tell of forms of extravagance, too narrow tell that the writer is more thrifty than wasteful.

MOST READERS submit the thought that margins on the left-hand side of the paper seem to increase, while the margins on the right remain rather steady. The same rule applies—tendency toward extravagance, but some form of thrift winning out at the end of each line.



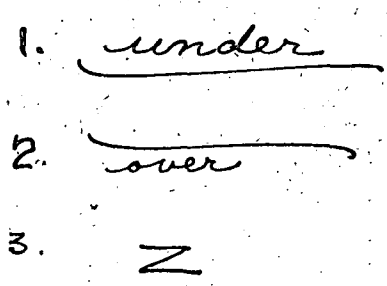
Another "missing factor" might be the lack of slant in the handwriting. Lack of slant or upright script reveals a person whose head rules her heart. No succumbing to sob stories, no being an "easy mark." The girl whose thoughts control her usually controls another.

"Lack of pressure," or handwriting which is so very light it is merely an ink impression, indicates one who has no practical interests, no physical hobbies. This individual often develops into a religious recluse.

"Lack of i-dot" would indicate a forgetful person, one who doesn't remember a meeting time, or forgets to return an umbrella or book.

Dear Miss Frances:
Three of the men in our office underscore their signatures. All of them are lawyers, with the same training, yet each one has a different underscore. I am enclosing these for your study.
Suzanne

Before studying these little oddities bear in mind that an underscore is a sign that the person using it either rates public attention or knows that he should have it. It is



either public or personal appreciation of the personality.

Many people in public life—politicians, entertainers, those salespeople who depend on their personalities to put over deals—overwork the underscore. The more unusual the individual, the more ornate or original the underscore.

#1. The curved, graceful underscore, placed neatly under the name, reveals a gracious personality, one who knows how to hold an audience.

#2. The same underscore except that it is placed OVER the signature. This is rare, very rare, telling of a most unique, most unusual individual. George Washington used this.

#3. The zigzag underscore. Here we have a man whose personality is sharp, acute, and who gives the impression of being a lot tougher than he really is.

Although the three men writing these are lawyers it would be to their advantage to

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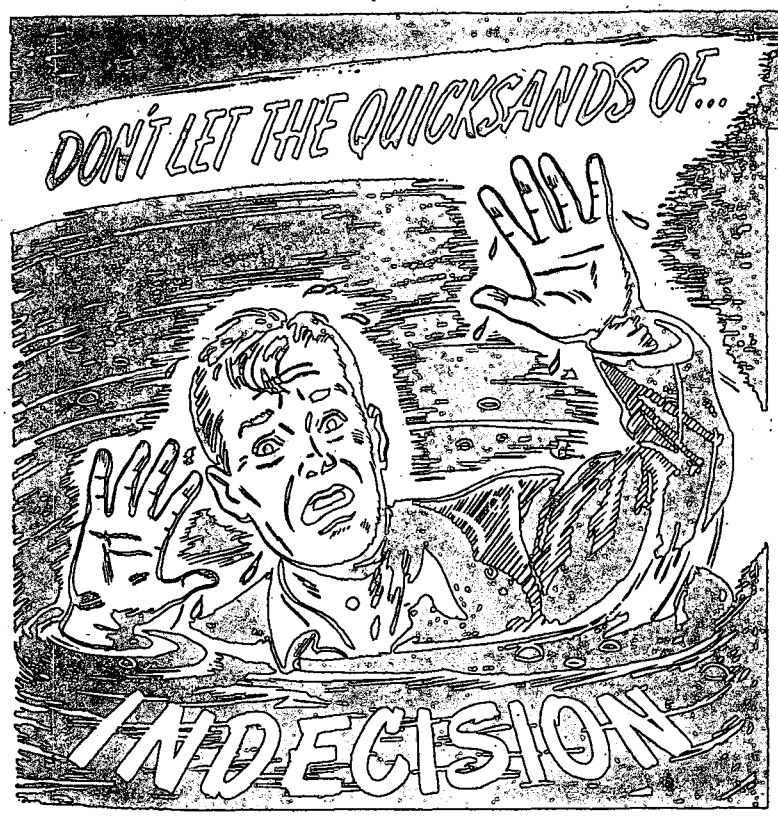

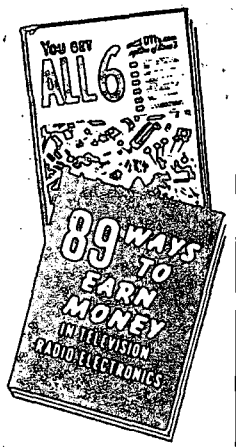

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(Continued from page 12)

work before the public, to make contacts, rather than burying themselves in research, They could sway juries and influence people.

From the Mailbag

Leo L. Your tiny writing, indicative of highly concentrative powers, is a good balance for the large script of your fiancée, telling of her varied interests. You may be out of patience with her lack of interest in minor matters, but you'll never be bored.

Martine Your handwriting does not have much "acting ability" in it. You asked for frankness, so there it is. Your writing shows more aptitude for the nursing profession, for you can work with both mental and physical factors, are willing to work hard and long, can handle responsibility once you understand it, are sympathetic but impersonal about it.

Susie L. So you don't doodle? Why worry? While it is true that ninety-nine out of one-hundred do not doodle you may well be the one-hundredth. It means your conscious and subconscious are so allied that you know what you want, have few inhibitions, few frustrations. Most of us know we doodle but others scribble and are unaware of it. Think it over before you apply the analysis.

Wilma T. Handwriting is indicative of character not of any specific age, other than whether a person is very young or very old. Thus, while it is impossible for me to tell if your boyfriend is twenty-three or twenty-four it is possible to tell that he is a practical joker, an extrovert, an affectionate likeable lad.

F.R.E. Graphology is the word to describe the study of character analysis from handwriting. You will find that textbooks on the subject have been written by qualified psychologists—two in the past year. A stamped envelope will bring you a list of these, the names of the psychologists, and the universities with which they are associated.

M.S.A. Microscopic handwriting indicates a person who has highly trained concentrative powers; who can do mathematics in his mind; who can focus his attention on one minute subject.

M.E.T. Your penmanship teacher is justified in expecting students to practice writing. Learn fundamentals, then your own character will direct the course your pen takes.

George S. So you never knew of doodling until you read this page? There are few who do not find their pen idling across the paper, maybe one in a million, and you are probably that one. Those are the people who work out of doors, who farm, are close to nature and usually have healthy, constructive thoughts. Your conscious and subconscious are thus allied. Hence—no doodles. Our ancestors were not doodlers, but as life's pace became faster, nerves became tauter, doodles became more frequent!

Send this coupon and a sample of handwriting with 10c and a stamped self-addressed envelope to:

Mary Frances, c/o New Love Magazine, May, 1951
205 East 42nd Street
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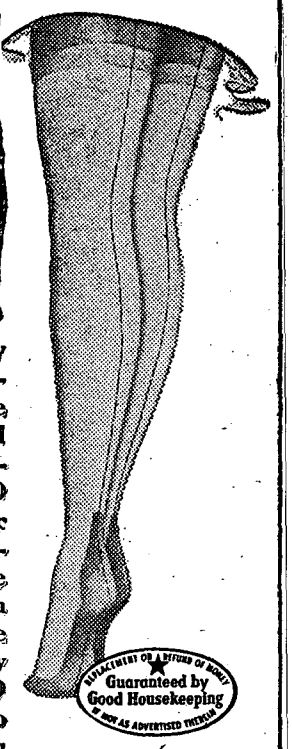

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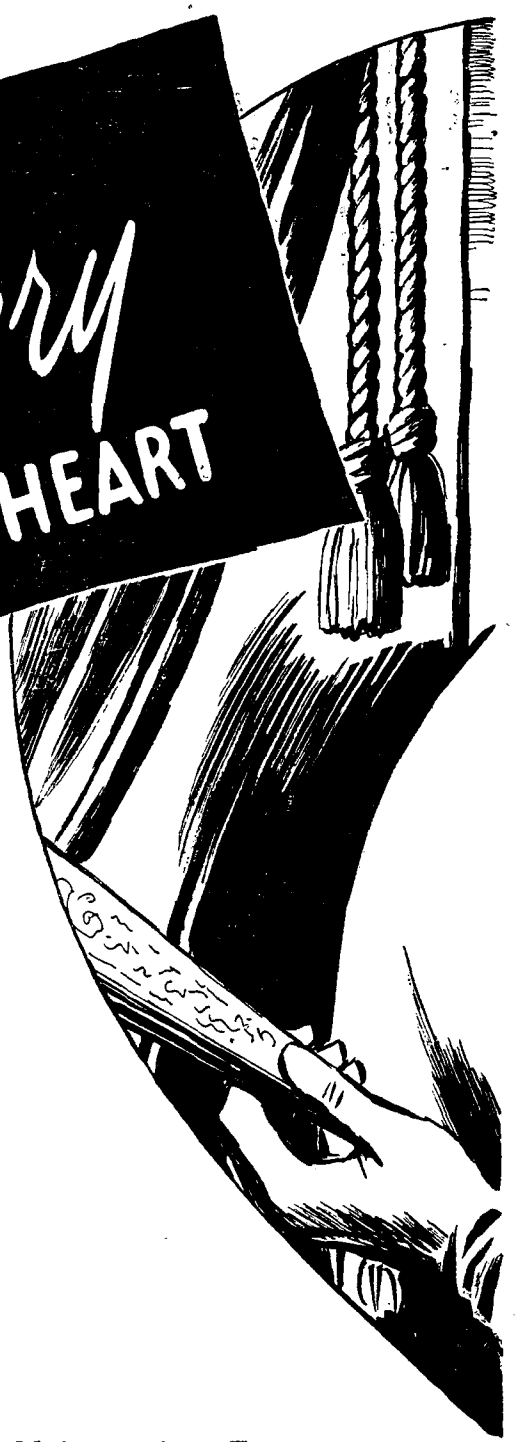
THE Angry HEART



By
FAN NICHOLS

CHAPTER ONE

Girl Without a Future

IN THE SEMI-DARKNESS just before dawn, Eve Carrington was startled from sleep by Missy's loud barking. Missy sounded furiously indignant about something going on in the truck garden beside the old, ruined plantation house.

Eve stumbled to the window, her eyes still heavy from sleep. A cry of dismay escaped her. Two half-grown hogs were in the garden, greedily rooting up her precious

Even Jon's kisses couldn't convince Eve that he wasn't her bitterest enemy.

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"You couldn't hate me, and kiss me like this."

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cabbages and broccoli. She realized they must have come through the gap in the unfinished fence. Without being told she knew who owned the hogs, and she decided instantly they hadn't reached her garden by pure accident.

Quickly, her temper at white heat, she pulled on worn blue jeans, a boy's wool shirt, and slid her small brown feet into scuffed sandals. Without bothering to brush the tousled mop of her black hair, she ran downstairs to the bare living room and snatched up her hunting rifle.

The sky was gray now and a heavy mist rose from the earth. The dog, a rust-red Irish setter, ran up to her and stopped. Eve lifted the rifle, took careful aim, and shot just over the heads of the hogs. Terrified, squealing, they crashed through the garden and scampered through the break in the fence, running toward the cypress grove.

They won't come back in a hurry! she thought grimly, but her fury mounted as she appraised the damage they had done. Rows and rows of tender young cabbage had been destroyed, and rows of new plants trampled down. As she stood contemplating the loss in terms of dollars and cents she heard the rapid beat of a horses' hooves. Looking up she saw Jon Everett coming out of the cypress grove on his big chestnut horse!

Eve's small, slim body stiffened with defiance. She pushed her thick curly hair, black as a blackbird's wings, back from the tanned oval of her face. Her wide, violet-gray eyes, framed in long black lashes, flashed with stormy fire. Her chin came up, small and stubborn, and above it her lovely, full-lipped mouth set in a tight line. She held the rifle ready in the crook of her right arm. In the distance she could hear the crashing and squealing of the hogs.

Jon Everett dismounted at the fence and strode toward her on foot. She felt like little David getting ready to battle Goliath, as six feet two of masculine strength approached. His dark red hair seemed to get redder as he came closer, and his brilliant blue eyes held pin-points of fury.

"Why were you shooting at my hogs?" he demanded.

"You're lucky I didn't kill them!" she snapped.

He clenched his riding whip and kept right on walking toward her. When he was ten feet away, Eve commanded: "Stay right there, Jon. I'm an excellent shot."

"Those were two of my prize young porkers," he said, "worth at least a thousand dollars. Did you have to frighten the life out of them over a couple dollars' worth of cabbages?"

In a cold, level voice she said, "This is the third time this month they've dug up my garden. If I weren't so tender-hearted you'd have ham and bacon instead of pigs. The next time you will have." Then she added bitterly, "I would have finished building the fence if they hadn't eaten up the money for the wire! They were trespassing on my property. I had a right to shoot them!"

"I'll pay for the—" he began, but she cut him off.

"I don't want anything from you! Nothing!"

"What's the matter with you, Eve?" he demanded. "Look at you, those rags you're wearing, that rifle. You're turning into a savage. Can't you behave like a human being? You're a well-bred girl, not a Cajun trapper. Why don't you go to your friends in New Orleans and live like a lady?"

"And sell you my property, of course," she retorted mockingly. "It's only two acres and a ruined house, but you want it because it's an eyesore, standing in the middle of your beautiful fields of sugar cane. You want to tear down the house, plow the ground, and erase Carrington forever! And you know why, too. Because the sight of it needles your guilty conscience. Well, I won't sell it to you. I've told you that

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before. Carrington is my home, and as long as I can grow vegetables and sell them, I'm staying right here!"

SHE LIFTED THE RIFLE, pointing it at him. "Now get off my land, Mr. Everett, and stay off. And don't turn any more of your livestock into my garden! I think you did it on purpose."

"Naturally." Sarcasm threaded his deep voice. "I have nothing to do but think up mischievous pranks." He didn't move and there was a bold glint in his blue eyes that made her uneasy. She felt the trembling in her body and wondered why he always had such an impact on her emotions. "You stubborn, crazy little fool," he said. "You've even forgotten you're a female. How is the South going to preserve the legend of its beautiful belles with a mess like you around?"

"I'm as much of a Southern belle as you are a Southern gentlemen!"

"Oh, I don't know," he said. "I still believe women should be gracious and feminine, and men should take care of them."

"I'll take care of myself," she flared. "Shut up and get going!"

"Don't tell me you'll shoot *me*," he taunted.

"I'd be within my rights. You're trespassing on my land!"

He laughed. In three long strides he reached her, grabbed the barrel of the rifle, and twisted it out of her hands. Still tauntingly, he said, "And I am within my rights as a man to kiss you!"

One of his arms pinned hers against her body. With his free hand he forced her furious face upward, then he bent down and crushed her mouth with his. It wasn't a kiss. It was an angry, punishing gesture; his dominant male strength against her feminine weakness. It made her head spin; her heart gallop like a runaway pony. She twisted and writhed, kicking his riding boots with her sandals. The moment he let go of her arms she hit out at him with her fists, beating on his chest with impotent rage.

"I hate you, I hate you!" she cried. "I'll call the police. I'll have you arrested."

His eyes were amused now, and his strong white teeth were framed in a grin. "Oh, no, you won't," he said. "What would you tell them? That I kissed you? Since when is that a criminal act? You ought to be glad a man would *want* to kiss you—the way you look. And don't be so high and mighty about your property, Eve Carrington. I might get it yet."

He stooped, picked up her rifle, bowing low as he handed it to her. "You can shoot me in the back if you care to," he said, then turned and walked toward his horse.

Eve thought she had never seen anything as arrogant as his wide, straight back. It was a maddening target.

She went back into the pillared colonial mansion, her bewilderment at his kiss overriding her resentment. Why had he kissed her? He knew she hated him. And why had her own body betrayed her by reacting so terrifically?

AFTER THREE CUPS of steaming coffee, flavored with chicory and blended with scalding milk in the Southern style, Eve felt her anger subside a little. Perhaps she couldn't finish the fence right away, but she had enough money saved to pay the interest on the bank loan. It was a week past due, but Mr. Montgomery, at the bank, wouldn't mind. He'd been so good about renewing the loan, again and again, not asking her to pay anything on the principal, being satisfied that she paid the interest. She hadn't had enough money until yesterday because her customers in New Orleans were buying quantities of vegetables for Easter.

She decided not to think about Jonathan Everett, yet in spite of herself, she had to "give the devil his due." When Jon bought Live Oakes, three years ago, it was run down and weed-grown. Through his own hard work and indefatigable efforts he'd

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built it up to a prosperous sugar plantation, and made the house a showplace. Of course he had the money to hire good help, and buy everything he needed and he wasn't afraid of work.

She remembered how fascinated she'd been when he first came to Live Oaks. Twenty-seven, and a bachelor, he had social position, money, and charm. A great many New Orleans belles had tried to marry him. At that time Eve's father was alive, and she had gone with him to several balls at Live Oaks. She had danced with Jon, flirted with him like any normal nineteen-year old girl, and there had been a few stolen kisses which had excited and thrilled her. She had even fallen in love with him, and dreamed of marrying him some day. But Jon had been far more interested in making his plantation pay than in selecting a wife.

Her father had never discussed the business affairs of Carrington with her. He drank a great deal to ease his sorrowing heart, for he had never gotten over her mother's death. He was quiet, gentle, and absent-minded. He had lost interest in his cotton fields and gradually Carrington fell into decay and ruin. When he died Eve had a cruel awakening. She'd found that the house was mortgaged to its crumbling roof, and that her father had sold all the land except the two acres surrounding the house. And he had sold it to Jon Everett!

AT TWENTY-ONE she was penniless and in debt. She saw Jon Everett in a night light: A land-greedy man who had taken advantage of her father's drinking. Her hidden love had turned overnight into hatred. In her disillusionment she had cried out:

"Why did you do it? Why didn't you tell me that Father was selling the plantation bit by bit to you? Why didn't you warn me so I could stop him—so I could save something of Carrington!"

"Because he asked me *not* to tell you," Jon had said quietly. "He let me think he was putting the money I paid him into a savings account for you. He said you couldn't live at Carrington alone after he was gone. He wanted you to go to New Orleans and live like the fine lady you are."

"But he *didn't* save the money! There were only a few dollars left."

"I don't know what he did with it," Jon replied.

"*I* know," she had admitted bitterly. "He sent me to a fancy finishing school, saying he could well afford it. I suppose he hoped I would marry a rich man before he died. And I didn't."

Jon had smiled. "Well, I hadn't considered marrying just yet, but I suppose I could marry you, Eve. Somebody has to take care of you and I—"

"Thanks, I don't want your charity, or your pity," she flung at him. "I wouldn't marry you if I starved to death!"

Jon said stiffly, "I don't know what I can do for you, then. I certainly wouldn't expect you to marry a man you disliked. I'll buy your house if you want to sell, and you can live in the city until you decide what you want to do."

"I'll stay at Carrington," she had told him with grim determination. "Nobody's going to run me off or buy me out!"

His temper had risen to meet hers. "All right, be a stubborn little idiot. Your attitude is unreasonable. It's not my fault your father sold you out."

"It *is* your fault," she raged. "You could have told me. Instead, you lied and schemed and cheated!"

His face had gone white from her accusations. For a moment she'd thought he would slap her, but he had turned away and left her fuming.

From that time on she had resented his strength, his boldness, his male dominance, his success. There had been an undeclared feud between them. Then she had started her vegetable garden, bought a small second-hand truck, and turned peddler. Ashamed of her clothes, her appearance, her poverty,

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she had given up her former friends and refused to go anywhere. She felt like a person with no past and no future. There was only today, and every today was filled with the back-breaking struggle for existence . . .

AFTER BREAKFAST Eve collected tomatoes, onions, carrots, and lettuce from the hothouse she had built with scraps of lumber and window glass. Lifting and bending, she piled the boxes of vegetables in the back of the little truck, then put up the tail gate.

Before starting on the five mile journey to the city, she went back in the house, scrubbed her face and hands and tied her hair behind her ears with a red ribbon. In the mirror she saw a tanned young face with bleak gray eyes and a mouth that hadn't known a lipstick for months. She looked down at her small hands, once lovely and delicate, now rough and brown. Jon's words echoed through her mind: *Look at you! You've forgotten you're a female!*

I haven't forgotten, she thought, but who cares about the looks of a vegetable peddler? Then a perverse little grin pulled at her lips.

"Anyhow, Jon kissed me," she whispered. "I can't be too bad, even yet."

By early afternoon she had finished her route and parked her truck on Canal Street. She made her way to her bank through the gay Easter Saturday crowds, and sought out Mr. Montgomery, the thin roll of bills in her coin purse.

She smiled at him. "I've come to pay the interest. I'm sorry I'm late."

His long face was regretful. "I'm afraid you're *too* late, Miss Carrington," he said. "I don't know how to tell you, but—"

Panic seized her. "What do you mean, too late?"

His hands fluttered in apology. "The bank directors felt they couldn't carry your loan any longer without payment on the principal," he said. "The mortgage was

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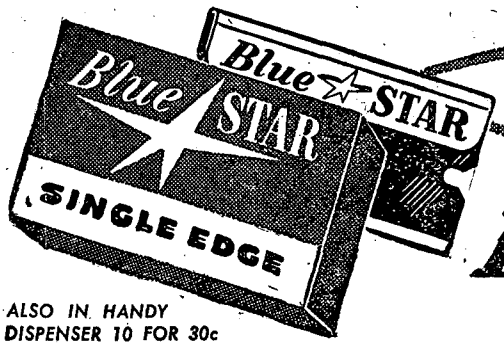

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sold to a gentleman early this morning."

"Who bought it?"

"Jonathan Everett," he said.

A helpless anger flooded through her as she turned and went out of the bank, her eyes blank and unseeing. Jon must have come in town and bought the mortgage this morning after she shot at his pigs and defied him. He had done it to get even with her, to show her she couldn't fight him and win. Well, she thought doggedly, she wasn't beaten yet!

SHE DROVE THE TRUCK along the highway as fast as its ancient motor would go. At last she came to the broad, oak-lined drive leading up to Jon's great colonial house. The long, looping festoons of gray Spanish moss, hanging from the live oak trees, gave a strange and eerie beauty to the place.

Eve stopped the truck squarely in front of the white door with its brass doorknob and brass knocker. Getting out, she marched up the steps and let the knocker fall on the door panel. Jon must have been expecting her, for he opened the door himself. His riding clothes had been discarded and he wore gray slacks and a gray suede jacket. A white sports shirt was open at his tanned throat, and a carelessly knotted blue silk scarf nestled above it, emphasizing the blue of his eyes, the dark red of his hair. The sound of laughing voices swirled all around him.

"I hope I'm not intruding," she said stiffly. "I've come to pay the interest on the loan."

Jon's eyes crinkled with amusement. "I don't care about the interest," he said.

Eve tensed with sudden fear. "Let's get this straight, Jon. You bought the mortgage so you could get the property. That's clear enough. You don't want the interest because you want to foreclose on me."

"Go on, I'm listening," he said quietly. "So far you make me sound like the cruel villain in an old-fashioned melodrama—about to foreclose and throw you and your dog out into a raging blizzard. Right?"

"Exactly," she flared. "Unless, of course, I pay off the loan at once. Well, I can't, and you know it." Tears of frustration welled up in her wide, violet-gray eyes. "Haven't you done enough harm?" she asked hoarsely. "Can't you let me keep my ruins?"

"I don't like ruins," he said, "either in houses or women."

She stepped back as if he had slapped her. "What *do* you want?" she whispered.

"I'll let you know the first of the month," he said.

"You don't have to tell me what you'll do then," she said bitterly. "I'll be expecting the sheriff with a dispossess notice."

His voice cracked coldly. "All right, Eve. Have it your way. Since you've decided I'm the heartless villain, I shall try not to disappoint you!"

A GIRL CAME UP beside Jon and peered out at Eve. She was tall, lushly-curved, and utterly beautiful. Laura Mae Marsh, the most popular debutante in New Orleans. Laura Mae, who was famous for her amber hair, her great amber eyes, her milk-white skin. She was the spoiled, reckless darling of an old, aristocratic family who still lived in the French Quarter.

"I wondered what was keeping you, darling," she said, putting a slender white hand on his arm. Then she saw the vegetable truck and her amber eyes swung to Eve's taut face.

"Why, you must be Eve Carrington," she said in surprise. "You've certainly changed since we were at Miss Beauford's! I heard you were peddling vegetables, but I—goodness, what's happened to you?"

"Won't you come inside, Eve?" Jon asked.

"So you can show me off in my rags to your guests?" Her face was white with humiliation. She turned to Laura Mae and said stiffly, "If you had to live and work

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the same way I do, *you* would change, too."

"But Carrington was so beautiful once," Laura Mae murmured.

"It isn't now!" Eve snapped. "Oh, it still has twenty rooms, but they're bare and moldy. I live in the only three rooms where the roof doesn't leak. I haven't been doing any entertaining, Laura Mae, so don't feel hurt that we haven't seen each other. In fact, no one ever comes to Carrington these days . . . except Mr. Everett's pigs!"

Laura Mae's vivid, sensuous mouth was partly open, as if she couldn't quite believe it all. Then her lips curved into an inviting smile directed at Jon. "Do come back to your guests, darling. We have to leave soon to get our costumes ready for the masked ball tonight." Her tone implied that he couldn't posibly wish to prolong any conversation with anyone so poor and unimportant as Eve Carrington.

"Make my excuses to the guests, Laura Mae," Jon said firmly, "I haven't finished talking to Eve. In fact our conversation began early this morning." He laughed softly.

Laura Mae turned again toward Eve. Her eyes narrowed with speculation, her full underlip pouted. "She does live awfully close by, doesn't she?" she murmured. "I suppose she brings all her troubles to you and you sympathize with her—" She paused, frowning. "She's rather attractive at that, in an urchin sort of way—"

Jon laughed again. "I find her very attractive, Laura Mae. Now leave us alone."

Still pouting, Laura Mae left the door without saying a direct word to Eve.

Between clenched teeth, Eve said, "I'd like to change places with her for just one day! It might make her human!"

"It hasn't made you very human," Jon retorted, his smile gone. "I don't see you exuding sweetness and light, or forgiveness."

"Not where you're concerned," she said. "I'll never forgive you for what you've done to me. I've never hated anyone as I hate you!"

"Are you sure of that?" he challenged.

He stepped forward. His hands gripped her shoulders and his mouth came down on hers with a soft, caressing, insistent pressure. Taken off guard, Eve felt a wild, crazy rapture leap through her. Oh, he knew how to kiss! He knew how to awaken her to all the long abandoned dreams of love. Then, while his lips were still holding hers, she thought: I'll give him something to think about, too!

Putting her arms around him she returned his kiss with all the fire of her starved emotions. How long they held each other, she didn't know until Laura Mae's voice broke them apart.

"Jon! I'm getting impatient with you!"

Jon let Eve go and they stared at each other with wondering glances. Then past him she saw Laura Mae's amber, cat-like eyes, with a cold gleam of hatred in them.

Without speaking she ran down the steps to her truck. As she drove off she saw that the big white door was closed . . .

CHAPTER TWO

Kiss From a Stranger

AT HOME, in the sagging kitchen, Eve fed Missy and choked down a sandwich and a glass of milk. She told herself that Jon's kiss meant nothing, either to him, or to her. It was his way of asserting his ego, and she was a fool to let herself be trapped by emotion even momentarily. No kiss would alter Jon's determination to own Carrington, nor would it stop him from evicting her the first of the month.

Her head fell to her arms, outstretched on the table. The hot tears fell on her flesh and sobs shook her small slender shoulders. She loved Carrington so terribly. She didn't want to leave it. Carringtons had lived here since eighteen hundred.

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As if she were taking a last look at someone dying, someone she loved, she got up and walked through the faded, decaying rooms of the once-great mansion. Most of the rooms were shuttered and closed, and an air of desolation was all around her. No one, but a girl with great courage and family pride would go on living in such poverty.

Missy put a cold nose into Eve's hand and whimpered and Eve's tears were tangled in the setter's glossy coat.

Sometime in the middle of the night she was awakened by a low growl from Missy. Raising herself on one elbow Eve listened. At first she heard nothing and started to order the dog back to sleep. Then she heard the soft tap-tapping of knuckles on the kitchen door. She touched a match to the kerosene lamp beside her bed, and threw a corduroy robe over her nightgown.

Holding the lamp in one hand, holding Missy's collar with the other, she went down the stairway, and got her rifle before she went to the kitchen.

"Who's there?" she called.

"Someone who needs help," came the answer in a worried masculine voice. "Please let me in, Miss Carrington. I won't harm you. I'm in desperate trouble!"

AGAINST HER BETTER judgment, Eve opened the door slowly and held the lamp up to the face of the man who stood there. It was not a face she knew, but it was an extraordinarily handsome one, dark, reckless, moody. One eye was bruised and swollen. Damp brown curls strayed over a patrician forehead and soft brown eyes entreated her with open desperation. He wore a pirate's costume of black velvet knee breeches, ruffled white silk shirt, red cummerbund, black jacket. A pirate's hat, with crossbones on it, and an eye patch, dangled from one of his narrow hands. One shirt sleeve was torn, and the wide-topped boots were damp and muddy.

"Who are you?" she demanded.

"Richard La Fitte," he said. "A very distant descendant of Jean La Fitte, the famous Louisiana pirate. Don't worry, Ma'am, I consider myself a gentleman where ladies are concerned. You needn't fear me." His voice was a soft southern drawl which would have been charming if it hadn't been so fear-ridden.

"Very well, come in." She set the lamp on the kitchen table, and locked the door.

Richard La Fitte sank into a chair, trying to slow his hard breathing. He wasn't tall, about five-feet nine or ten, and he had a slim, quick, wiry body. "The girl told me to come here," he said.

"What girl?"

"I don't know. I wish I did. She wore a white wig, and a black satin mask. I'm sure I'd recognize her if I saw her again—"

"You'd better begin at the beginning," Eve said patiently. "While you talk, I'll make coffee."

"Thanks, I need it." He hesitated, his brown eyes watching her face. At last he said, "I might as well tell you the truth. It'll be in all the papers tomorrow, anyhow. I went to one of the holiday masked balls tonight. I met this girl, dressed as Madame Pompadour, and we drank and danced together. There was a wonderful excitement between us, like two people falling in love. Around midnight, before the unmasking, we slipped away from the ball and went to a night club on Bourbon Street. A lot of masked people were there, mostly men. One of them kept asking my girl for a dance and she kept refusing. We'd all had a lot to drink. Finally he got insistent, began making insulting remarks."

Richard shrugged. "I suppose I'm a hothead. Anyhow I was brought up in the old tradition of protecting a lady's honor—the old duel at sunrise business. I challenged him to meet me outside. The next thing I knew his fist drove into my jaw and I was on the floor. I got up and waded into him. I had to, to defend myself. I don't remember too much about it—I was tight and angry! The fight turned into a brawl and

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we hit each other with everything we could get our hands on. There was a big champagne bottle on my table. I hit him with it. He fell, and his head struck a marble pedestal. He was laid out cold. Someone yelled he was dead. The girl grabbed my arm and told me to run before the police came. She said, 'The Carrington Place—five miles east—broken-down place where no one ever goes.' Then she disappeared and I ran. In fact I ran most of the way out here. I knew where Carrington was—I'd driven by it a few times."

Eve said slowly, "So you don't know whether the man is dead or alive."

He sighed. "If he's dead they'll arrest me for murder. How can I prove it was self-defense? Only the girl heard what he said—saw him lash out at me. She's my only witness, the only person who can clear me—"

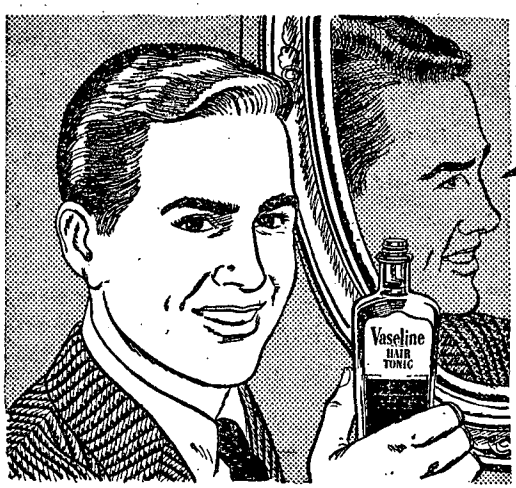
"And you don't know who she is, and never saw her without her mask," she finished wondering who this girl could be.

He nodded wearily. "But she told me to come here. She'll know where to find me. My only chance is to stay here until she shows up." His voice was urgent now, begging her. "Will you hide me, Miss Carrington? It was an accident, and I don't want to go to prison for an accident. If you'll let me stay a day or two, only that long. She's bound to come. And maybe he isn't dead. In that case I'll leave at once. You see," and his smile was rueful, "my only disguise was the eye patch. *Anyone* can identify me."

Eve finished making the coffee without saying anything. She thought of the shuttered, deserted rooms in the house, rooms where no one would look for a fugitive. She thought of her own troubles, and suddenly felt pity for this man.

On impulse, recklessly, she said, "All right. I'll help you, Richard. But only for a day or two."

"HE'S GOT LADDIE BOY in check all right, but not Dry Scalp. My, what unkempt hair! Looks like a mane . . . and I'll bet it's as hard to comb. Loose dandruff, too. He needs 'Vaseline' Hair Tonic!"



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"Thanks," he breathed fervently. "You're an angel, Miss Carrington. I'll never forget this kindness—I'll repay you, somehow."

After he had drunk several cups of coffee she found two old patchwork quilts and handed them to him. "You'll have to sleep on the floor, and you can't risk any sort of a light."

She led him through moldy, dusty hallways to a room on the third floor. Missy padded along beside them. Apparently she had accepted Richard. At least she waved her tail too and fro when he patted her head.

Again in her own room, with Missy and the loaded rifle, Eve locked her door. She had agreed to help Richard La Fitte, but that didn't mean she trusted him. Still, as she snuggled down in her bed, she felt a quiver of excitement. Somehow, it seemed adventurous and strangely romantic, to be hiding a descendant of Jean La Fitte in her home. And he was handsome . . .

AS BREAKFAST WAS READY next morning he looked at her with admiration. "You're brave," he said, "and you've got a heart. Besides that, you're extremely pretty."

She flushed at his compliment, conscious of the powder and lipstick she had used for the first time in ages, of her clean white shirt and the white ribbon holding her long, curling black hair. "For that, you may call me Eve," she smiled.

"I want you to call me Dick." His smile was shy, and nice. He went on asking questions about her, why she lived here alone. Briefly, honestly, she told him of her father and the lost acres. She didn't mention Jon Everett. She hardly knew why, except that her feud with Jon was a private affair.

Suddenly Dick stiffened. His fork dropped to his plate. "Horse," he said. "Coming this way."

Eve sprang up. "Get back to the room, Dick. I'll clear your dishes off the table—"

She heard his footsteps echoing in the upper hallway as she put the dishes in the sink and covered them with a cloth. Then, striving for casualness, she went outside. Jon Everett was dismounting from his horse.

He came straight up the front walk to the house, his face sober, his eyes unsmiling, his cropped red head bare to the morning mist. Eve put her hands on her hips and glared at him, remembering everything that had happened yesterday. For a little while Dick's troubles had banished her own worries, but now they were back.

She said defiantly, "It isn't the first of the month yet. Carrington is still mine!"

"Oh, be quiet," he ordered. "You're always spoiling for a fight. I don't like fighting with women."

"But I'm not a woman, remember?" she mocked. "You said yesterday I'd forgotten I was a female."

"Well, I'm going to give you a chance to *pretend* you're one," he retorted. "I came to invite you to a costume ball at Live Oaks."

"That's cruel! You know I have no clothes and no money to buy an evening gown! Not that I'd come, anyhow."

"You must have trunks full of old clothes," he said. "I'll make it a costume ball, Civil War period, and you can wear a hoop skirt if you like. But I want you to come."

"Why?" she demanded. "So you can make fun of me?"

His eyes were unreadable. "Let's say I want to see you in a dress. I want to see if you can still look like a girl."

"I won't come. You wasted your time coming over here."

"Oh, Eve, bury the axe for one evening, will you?" he asked in exasperation. "Let me help you go through the old trunks—"

She felt herself go rigid at the thought of Jon and Dick in the same house. "Sorry, I'm not inviting anyone in these days,"

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she said. "I'm sure your pigs live better than I do."

He seemed resigned. Then he said, "If you come to the ball, I might consider accepting just the interest on the loan, and let you remain at Carrington for a while. I'm a fairly reasonable villain—"

Anger tore through her. "What are you trying to do to me, Jon Everett? Play with me the way a cat plays with a mouse? First I have to go, then I can-stay!"

"All right," he said. "I *dare* you to come to my party!"

Eve tossed back the mane of her black hair. Her gray eyes blazed. "I'll be there," she flung at him.

Now he grinned, his strong white teeth flashing in his tanned face. "Good. Oh, yes, Eve, before I forget—you should use lipstick more often. It's quite becoming."

He cocked his head to one side, still grinning, then he swung around and went back to his horse.

Darn him! she thought. He got his own way again.

HER RESENTMENT was turned aside by thoughts of Dick hiding on the third floor. She must be careful. Jon must never suspect he was there. It would be a prize weapon to use against her!

When Dick came downstairs in answer to her call, she explained that Jon Everett had been here. "He invited me to a grand ball," she added.

"I hope it turns out better than the one I went to last night," he said wryly. "I wonder if he heard about the fight. Did he say anything?"

Eve shook her head. "I have to take my vegetables into town now, Dick. I won't be home until the middle of the afternoon. Please be careful. I guess you needn't stay in that bare room, but please don't go outside the house. I'll leave Missy outdoors. She'll bark if anyone comes."

He came up close to her, his brown eyes warm and soft. "You're pretty wonderful," he murmured. "I could fall in love with you, Eve."

"Like you fell in love with the masked girl?" she parried, feeling her heart quicken.

"No," he said. "That was an adventurous escapade. But you I could love, honey—really love. May I kiss you—very respectfully?" He didn't wait for her answer.

His slender hands pressed her arms and his reckless lips sought hers in a kiss that was teasing, tender, yet somehow very boyish. She felt no stir, no thrill. It was a sweet kiss, nothing more, and she was strangely disappointed. She had hoped it would thrill her so much that she would forget the exciting, maddening kisses of the man she hated, but if anything, it had enhanced her memory.

"Don't kiss me again," she said sharply.

A hurt look appeared in his eyes, and for the first time she noticed the undisciplined line of his mouth, the immaturity of his chin. The chin belonged to a man who hadn't quite grown up. It softened her attitude toward him.

"If I have offended you, I apologize," he said. "But you're so lovely, I couldn't resist. But I promise to be good from now on."

She started for the door, and turned around. "Remember, Dick. Don't let anyone see you. I'll bring back the newspapers . . ."

BECAUSE SHE WAS LATE getting into town, Eve had no chance to buy the papers until about two in the afternoon when she finished her route. Then she sat in her truck and read them, learning things that Dick had not told her. The fullest account said:

> A hunt is being conducted throughout the entire county for a man who calls himself Richard La Fitte, and claims to be a descendant of Jean La Fitte, the pirate. He killed Yancy Calvert, young man about town, at the Creole Club last night. The two men engaged

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in a brawl which ended with the fracture of Calvert's skull. Calvert died enroute to the hospital; La Fitte escaped and is hiding out somewhere. There is evidence that a masked woman was the cause of the quarrel. She has not been identified, nor found. Young La Fitte arrived in New Orleans about six months ago, saying he had been abroad, in Europe, saying he had been reared in Tennessee. No one questioned his name, although he had no proof of his right to it. He appeared to have plenty of money for gambling and drinking and was accepted by the reckless young element of the city. When last seen he was wearing a pirate's costume. He is wanted for murder.

There was a detailed description, but no picture, and a reward of five hundred dollars was offered for information as to his whereabouts.

Five hundred dollars, Eve thought. It was a lot of money, and she needed money so badly . . . Yet she knew she could not inform on Richard. He might be a fugitive from justice, he might not be as innocent as he professed, but he was a guest in her house, and she could not betray him. Nevertheless, she was frightened as she realized the seriousness of her position. By hiding him she was breaking the law and becoming an accessory to his crime. If the police found him at Carrington, she, too, could be sentenced to prison!

Eve went to the office of the New Orleans Picayune and paid for an ad in the newspaper's personal column. It read:

Will the girl who was with R.L.F. the night of March 23rd, please get in touch with Box 591; care of this paper? Confidential. E.C.

The little truck wheezed and puffed up the winding driveway to the sagging dilapidation of the once-white colonial mansion of the Carringtons. Eve sighed, viewing the weeds and ruins, the cracked and peeling paint of the house.

She stopped her truck at the side of the house and started to get out. Then suddenly an unexpected sound froze her into stillness. Very distinctly she heard the sound of a horse going through the cypress grove; going fast, riding away from the house toward the bayou. Puzzled and fearful, she hurried into the house, hardly knowing what to expect.

But when she called Dick's name, she heard him close his door and run lightly down the stairs to the kitchen. There was no alarm on his face. It was merely anxious, watchful.

"Did you bring the papers?" he asked breathlessly.

"They're in the truck. I'll get them in a minute. Dick, who was here?"

"Here?" his voice was blank. "Nobody. Not a soul since you left. Why?"

She told him of hearing the horse in the grove. He shook his head.

"I heard nothing, Eve. I was here, in the kitchen. I didn't see anything or anyone—"

"Then the truck coming must have frightened them away," she decided.

Dick sounded impatient. "The papers, Eve. Did he die—the man I fought with?"

His face paled as he read the answer in her somber eyes. "Then the police want me for *murder*!"

WITHOUT SPEAKING Eve brought him the papers, then went back to the truck for the groceries. When she returned Dick held a paper crumpled between his hands. His mouth was bitter and angry; his eyes brooding. He was muttering about the girl.

"I put an ad in the Picayune Personal Column," Eve told him. "Maybe she'll answer."

"And maybe she won't," he said. "She knows where I am."

"There's a five hundred dollar reward—"

"She wasn't the sort of girl who looked as if she needed five hundred dollars," he said. Then he looked at Eve sharply, almost cunningly. "But you need money, don't you?" he asked warily. "Will you turn me in?"

"Of course not," she answered. "Besides, I'm in this up to my neck. I've hidden you. There's a law against that, you know."

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"I'll try not to bring any trouble to you." His voice was sincere, his eyes grateful. "I wish I could give you some money for helping me, Eve, but the truth is, I haven't any. A few dollars, that's all." A wry smile of self-derision twisted his handsome mouth. "I suppose I really came to New Orleans to trade on my name, hoping I could marry an heiress. This mystery girl looked like one. I thought maybe I'd hit the jackpot at last. Some jackpot!"

"You're a foolish, romantic kid," she scolded. "At twenty-six you ought to know better. A rich wife can make a man dance at the end of her purse strings. You'd hate that. You'll have to make something of yourself, by your own work, Dick. You'll have to grow up some day."

"I won't have a chance if the sheriff gets me first," he said.

Eve thought, I don't know what to do about him. There's something so helpless about him, and yet I can't let myself be blind to his faults. He's hot-headed, and fickle. Indirectly, at least, he caused a man's death. I was probably a fool to let him in last night.

"You can't stay here indefinitely, Dick," she said. "There's a search on for you. Sooner or later they'll come here."

He stood up and paced the floor, the wide tops of his pirate's boots flapping against his ankles as he walked. "Just another night or so," he begged. "I have nowhere else to go, Eve. My only chance is to stay here, gambling that the girl will come."

"All right," she agreed with misgivings.

Dick was talking, half to himself. "I'm sorry Calvert died. I didn't know him. I had nothing against him. I didn't want to kill him. I'm no murderer. He started the fight. She can prove it if she will—"

Eve left him and went up to a storage room on the third floor. She unlocked it and went into the cold, damp, mildew smell and walked over to the old-fashioned, brass-bound trunk that was placed against the far wall crowded among relics of the past.

From folds of tissue paper she lifted a white dress, an exquisite, lovingly made dress from the Civil War period. It had a great hoop skirt, a tiny waist with a blue satin sash, and a bodice cut as low as any modern off-the-shoulder gown. There was a white French fan embroidered with delicate figures, and black slippers of finest kid, the satin laces still in them.

She held the gown against her small, slim body. It looked as if it would fit. Into the dusty old room of past Carringtons, she whispered fiercely, "For just one night, at least, I'll be a Southern belle! I'll forget everything else for that night, and I'll make Jon Everett wish he had never invited me to Live Oaks!"

Her mind conjured up the look of astonishment that would be in his blue eyes. Even to herself she couldn't explain why it was so imperative for Jon to see her as a fascinating woman.

She and Dick had dinner, then talked a while, both of them worried. Dick found a book of Robert Browning's poetry, and read to her. It lulled her and made her feel less lonely. And she thought achingly how wonderful it would be never to live alone again; to have someone to love who loved her . . . a home and security, children and a future.

She stood up abruptly. "I'm going to turn in, Dick. I'm dead tired."

With a pleading smile, he said, "May I risk a very small candle in my room if I keep the shutters closed? I'm too worried to sleep. I'd like to read."

"If you keep the shutters closed," she said. Turning to the Irish setter, she whispered, "Come along, Missy. I want you in my room to warn me if there's any trouble tonight . . ."

IT MUST HAVE BEEN midnight, perhaps later, when Missy's low growling awakened her. The moment she sat up, the setter barked, sharp and loud, warning-

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ly. For a moment, Eve wondered why the room looked so light, so reddish, then she ran to the window and looked out at the garden. Fire was spreading through it, slowly because of the dampness, but it was creeping nearer and nearer to the house.

Pulling on a shirt and jeans, she ran out of her room, calling to Dick. Between the two of them, the garden hose and buckets of water, they managed to get the fire out in less than a half hour. With a lantern she stepped gingerly over the charred rows of what had once been healthy vegetables. As she neared the hothouse she saw with dismay where the fire had started! The wooden walls were burned down; the glass roof had collapsed on the tender young plants!

She wasn't aware of the tears running down her face until Dick said, "It's no use crying, Eve. It's done. Come back to the house and I'll make you some coffee."

She let him lead her into the kitchen, and place her in a chair. "There was no way for the fire to start by itself," she said with angry hopelessness. "Someone set it. Someone who wanted to burn up my garden and my house. Someone who wanted to make it impossible for me to stay here!"

Jon, she thought. *Jon, or one of his men. This will keep me from earning any money. I can't pay the interest on the loan. I can't even eat for more than a week!*

Her small, rough-skinned hands clenched into fists. "I hate him," she whispered. "He's absolutely ruthless. He's determined to break my spirit." And her hatred consumed her as the fire had consumed the garden.

An approaching car cut the stillness, and Dick ran quickly up the back stairs.

Hard knuckles rapped on the front door. Eve pulled herself together, and went through the long hallway. Dull hatred gleamed in her smudged gray eyes when she saw Jon Everett.

"I just returned to Live Oaks from town," he said quickly. "One of the stable boys told me he saw a fire in this direction. I was worried—"

"The fire is out." Her words were dry, rasping. "I saved the house, but the garden and the hothouse are charred ruins. Are you disappointed, Jon? Did you plan to burn the house down, too? With me in it?"

He stared at her, horrified. "Are you implying that *I* set fire to your place?"

"Who else would do it?"

His mouth was a harsh line. "Think what you please, Eve." He started to say something else, then turned and hurried back to his big green convertible.

Back in bed again, shaking with nervous chills, Eve thought, I could be wrong. Maybe he didn't do it. But somebody did. And who would try to run me off my land except Jon?

Misery and hopelessness ate into her heart. It was a terrible thing to hate anyone as much as she hated Jon. Sometimes, in spite of all the things he had done, it was difficult to hate him, especially when she remembered his kisses . . .

As she was falling into tired sleep, she made a decision. She had tried fighting him with defiance, with work, with hatred, with accusations. Maybe if she tried fighting him as a desirable woman, she'd do better. She'd go to the ball, and somehow she would try to persuade him to pay some money above the amount of the loan. The loan was only half the value of the place. Then she'd give up Carrington. It was ruined for her anyway.

THE NEXT DAY she went around to her customers and explained there had been a fire, that they would have to buy from someone else. Two or three of them, who were old friends invited Eve to stay with them. But Eve declined graciously. Her stiff pride would never let her accept charity.

Before going back to the plantation she had a manicure, the first in a year, and

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bought lotion for her hands. She squeezed out an extra dollar for face powder and cold cream. It seemed a foolish expenditure, yet a great deal might depend on how attractive she could look at the ball at Live Oaks.

Dick was waiting for the newspapers when she got home. He smiled crookedly as he read the accounts of the manhunt. "It sounds as if they've covered every part of the county except this," he said. "How long before they get here, Eve?"

"Who can tell?" Then she said frankly, "I like you, Dick. I want to help you, but I don't particularly care about going to jail for doing it."

"I don't blame you," he said. "Just one more night, honey, and I'll try to get to the railroad yards and hop a freight. If I can get back to Memphis in a day or so, I can get help—"

"Are you really a descendant of La Fitte," she asked. "Be honest with me, Dick."

"I don't know for sure," he admitted. "He lived in the days of Andrew Jackson and that was almost a century and a half ago. My name is genuine, Eve. I dreamed up the rest. You know why."

"Thanks for being honest." Then she frowned. "There's been no answer to my ad. The girl must know you'll be tried for murder if they catch you—unless she comes to your rescue and tells the true story."

Dick's voice was suddenly harsh and furious. "Unless she's so afraid of getting involved she'd rather see me hang! Did you ever think of that, Eve? Did you know there are women like that in the world? No—I guess you wouldn't."

She tried to soothe him. "Maybe she'll come yet. Maybe tonight—maybe tomorrow . . . Don't give up hope."

Dick stood up, taking a stub of candle and a book. "I'm not good company, Eve. Excuse me." And he went up the two flights of stairs and along the hallway to his shuttered, empty room.

I wasn't awfully late, she couldn't have been asleep more than an hour, when she felt Missy's cold nose pressing into her cheek. There was no growl tonight, no barking, just this puzzled, silent questioning. That meant Missy sensed no danger. Something was unusual, that was all. Eve stroked the silky head and strained her ears for sounds. There were none. Yet Missy's ears were sharper than her own.

In her robe and slippers she went to her door, unlocked it and noiselessly opened it. There was a sound, but it was Dick pacing back and forth, back and forth in the room on the next floor. Suddenly the pacing stopped, and in the abrupt silence Eve was sure she heard voices.

Softly she stole up the stairway to the next floor; stopped again to listen. She heard Dick's voice plainly, then a low murmur that sounded like a woman's voice, hushed, almost whispering. She started on again, forgetting the loose board of the step next to the top. As she stepped on it, it creaked loudly.

Only silence dwelt in Dick's room now. She went on to his door and called through it, "Are you all right, Dick? I thought I heard you talking to someone."

His reassuring laugh came to her. "Sorry I disturbed you, Eve. I was reading poetry out loud to myself, that's all. I'll stop it. I'd let you in, but I'm not presentable—"

"Well, good night, Dick. I just wondered—"

"Good night, Eve. Don't worry. I'm all right," he answered.

She tried hard to go to sleep again, but she felt wide awake now, restless, and all of her worries rushed from the shadows to plague her. Then she heard them—light, soft footsteps. Steps going down to the lower floor. She heard a door open and close. She lay rigid, waiting. Endless minutes dragged by. Then she heard what she had been subconsciously waiting for—the sound of a car's motor starting up.

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Someone *was* in Richard's room! He'd lied and how silly of her to believe his silly excuse about reading aloud. Was it possible *the* girl had come here? But if she had, why would he try to deny it?

There was no answer now, not in the middle of the night. In the morning Eve decided she would face him and demand an explanation. Or make him leave at once . . .

HE CAME DOWN LATE, his face tired and drawn, a weary defiance in the set of his shoulders. Before she could ask him about last night, he said, "I lied to you last night, honey. I didn't want to involve you in this mess. The girl did come, finally. She kept calling my name and I heard her and went downstairs and took her up to my room so I could talk to her without bothering you."

"Did you find out who she was?" Eve asked quickly.

"No. She refused to tell me. She wore a heavy veil over her head and face, but I'm positive I could recognize her if I saw her again." He ran nervous fingers through his curly brown hair. "We argued. She doesn't want to be dragged into court. She's afraid of her precious reputation. She said she needed money desperately, and she had a chance to marry it, *if* there was no scandal. She wants me to give myself up, and rely on other witnesses at the Creole Club to swear Calvert's death was pure accident." An angry note rose in his voice. "I won't do it, Eve. I'm not a fool. Calvert had friends with him. They'd see that no one testified for me! I need *her*. If she tells the police the truth, I might have a chance." His shoulders slumped. "But she won't. She's only concerned about herself!"

Eve sipped her coffee and said slowly, "She might represent help to you, Dick, but she represents prison to me. She knows you're here, that I've helped you. If she—"

"She can't tell on you without involving herself," he reminded her. "I don't know what to do."

"Dick—you'll have to leave here tonight, as soon as it's dark. I'm sorry, but I'm in enough trouble already." Her gray eyes were kind, yet firm.

"I know." He reached for one of her cigarettes. "I'll go. I promise." He put down the cigarette and came around the table to her chair. Leaning down he kissed the top of her head, then his lips touched her eyes, and sought her mouth. She did not resist. When he raised his head he said, "No good, is it? I'm sorry. I could love you, Eve. I mean it—"

"I'm sorry, too," she said gently. "I only seem able to hate."

Dick went back to his chair. "I guess I'll definitely have to make a break tonight—try to get out of the state." He smoked moodily while she cleared the dishes from the table.

She wondered how she ever got into this situation. Any person in her right mind would have refused to hide a fugitive from the police.

To keep herself from useless worrying, she went up to her room and worked on her costume for the ball. So much might depend on how she looked tonight . . .

From her meager stock of provisions, Eve fixed the best meal she could manage for Dick. Afterward she wrapped some sandwiches in wax paper, and they looked at each other a long time in the lamplit kitchen.

"I wish you luck, Dick," she whispered. "So much luck!"

On impulse she went to him and put her arms around him, feeling an odd maternal sorrow for him. She touched his brown curls, laid her hand against his thin, handsome young cheek. His arms tightened around her, as if she were the only good thing left in his world. Then without a word he stepped away, opened the kitchen door, and disappeared into the damp mist of the night . . .

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CHAPTER THREE

Dearest Enemy

AT NINE-THIRTY, Eve entered the wide hall of Live Oaks. Jon came forward to meet her, staring as if he had never seen her before. "It can't be you," he said in wonder.

"Eve Carrington, the traditional Southern belle," she mocked softly, turning a little to get a full length view of herself in a mirrored wall panel.

A flush of pleasure made her eyes sparkle. The white dress was exquisite. The low-cut bodice made a white frame for her tanned arms and shoulders, young and slim and soft. At her throat she wore an antique gold medallion which had been her mother's, and her midnight black hair lay in a cluster of curls on her neck. Her eyes seemed enormous; her mouth was a soft scarlet provocation. Long white kid gloves, a little yellowed with age, covered her hands and her arms up above the elbow. She held the white silk fan lightly, coquettishly.

She curtsied before Jon, aware that tonight she was lovely, all woman, small and delicately feminine. He offered her his arm, and proudly escorted her into the great drawing room where other Southern belles and frock-coated, silk-shirted gentlemen were talking and dancing. The voices stopped as they stood in the archway, and several dozen pairs of eyes stared at Eve.

Jon said, "I believe some of you have met my neighbor, Eve Carrington. To those who haven't, may I say that she is the beautiful mistress of Carrington Plantation."

Several of the men approached them, program cards extended, all of them asking Eve for dances. Then more came, and Jon was squeezed to the side. Laughing, her tanned cheeks alive with excited color, Eve parceled out the dances, flirting outrageously. Why not? Jon wanted her to be feminine! And besides, it felt awfully good.

Then Jon was pushing his way through the admiring males. He reached for her program card and looked at it. "There are three dances left," he said imperiously. "I'm claiming them, and, as host, I also claim the first one!" He signalled the orchestra at the far end of the room and they swing into the *Blue Danube Waltz.*

As she went into Jon's arms she saw Laura Mae Marsh standing near, biting her lips, and eyeing her with animosity. Laura Mae was as recklessly beautiful as ever, wearing a fabulous black taffeta gown, hoop-skirted, daringly low cut, startling against her snow-white skin. Her amber hair and great amber eyes were accented by the golden topazes at her ears and throat, but her mouth, petulant and pouting, detracted from her beauty.

"Laura Mae doesn't approve of your dancing the first waltz with me," Eve murmured.

"I'll dance with whom I please," Jon said. "I'm not married to her yet."

Eve was unprepared for the shock his words gave her. Laura Mae—marrying Jon?

Trying to keep her voice light and teasing, she said, "Oh, are you going to marry her?"

"She's planning on it." His deep voice was teasing, too. "She seems to think it would be a good idea, especially since the Marsh family, if they had my money, could continue to live in grand style."

"She's very beautiful," Eve murmured.

"She is also spoiled and thrill-crazy," he commented. "However I could change that, I think." He chuckled softly.

Now Eve's voice was cold. "I'm sure you could."

"I've never been able to change *you,*" he said. "You've hated me too much."

ALL EXCITEMENT seemed to drain out of her. She felt confused, eaten by an urgent yearning she could not under-

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stand. His hand holding hers, his arm around her waist, his bold dark face looking down into hers, seemed to drive all reason away. He made her feel weak and helpless so that she wanted to cling to his strength; to feel that firm, strong mouth.

As if he had read her thoughts, he whirled her into a small anteroom, took the oval of her face in both his hands, and kissed her as he had never kissed her before. There was hunger in the kiss; need and desire; a burning determination to make her respond. Emotion picked her up and shook her, leaving her limp against him; leaving her lips soft, eager, hungry for his.

Then he whispered, "You don't really hate me, Eve. You couldn't kiss me like that if you did . . ."

She put her hands to her fevered face. She couldn't look at him. Forgotten was her plan to beguile him into buying Carrington instead of foreclosing on it. Deliberately she summoned up the memories of past wrongs.

She said bitterly, "You're mistaken, Jon. You are a handsome man, and I haven't been kissed for a long time, that's all. But it doesn't change my feelings toward you. I can never forgive you for sneaking the plantation away from my father, for buying my mortgage so you could make me beg you for mercy. Well, I'll never beg! I'll leave Carrington tomorrow. It's all yours. Plow it up, erase it from the face of the earth! Let your field hands trample it down!"

She whirled away from him, and ran back into the ballroom. A young man claimed her for his dance, and she went with him, smiling, flirting, having no idea of what she was saying or doing. As soon as the dance was ended, another young man held out his arms, and she danced again. It kept on and on and on; there was no time to feel, to think, to hate—or to love.

And then suddenly as she danced past one of the French doors she saw a face appear on the other side of the glass; a wild, frenzied face, with brown curls tumbled over its forehead. Dick La Fitte!

She slipped from her partner's arms, murmuring something about the powder room, and scurried to a back entrance that led to the rose garden.

With quick, desperate steps she walked toward the veranda and pushed him away from the lighted doorway. "Are you crazy?" she cried.

He tried to shake off her hand, but she held on. "I saw her!" he insisted hoarsely. "She's in there—in that room. I'm sure she saw me, too, because she stared straight at me, then turned and ran out of sight. You've got to get her for me, Eve! Bring her out here—I'll make her talk! I won't run away. I decided that tonight. I was thinking about you, how you fought trouble; how you didn't run away—and I'm a man—or at least I want to be one. Please find her, Eve!"

"What does she look like? What is she wearing?" Eve was alive with curiosity.

"A black dress. Her hair is blonde, sort of amber colored, and her eyes match. It looked as if she had a topaz necklace on—"

"Laura Mae Marsh! It couldn't be anyone else!"

Suddenly, as she said it, everything seemed to fit in. Laura Mae, hunting a thrill with a strange man she'd met at a masked ball, going to the Creole Club. Laura Mae, selfish enough not to risk her reputation to save Dick. Laura Mae, who had to marry money; who wanted to marry Jon Everett!

"I'll get her out here somehow," she promised. "Stay in the shadows. Don't let anyone else see you."

SHE HURRIED across the ballroom, through the dancing couples, and went down the long hallway. She looked in every room, thankful she hadn't run into Jon.

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Laura Mae was in the powder room. As Eve entered, she whirled to face her, her features ugly with fear and defiance.

Eve went up to her and took her by the wrist. "Come with me!" she snapped, pulling her toward the door. "If you don't come out and talk to Dick, he'll come crashing in here!"

"I don't know what you're talking about," Laura Mae said shrilly. "Let me go!"

Eve went on pulling her through the door and down the hall to a back entrance. Laura Mae was taller and heavier, but Eve's hands and arms were strong and wiry from hard work.

"Don't bother lying to me," she said in a low commanding voice. "Dick saw you, and I know the whole story. You were in my house last night!"

"No, no," Laura Mae cried. "He's crazy—he's lying. I don't know anything. I don't know him."

Eve jerked the door open with her free hand and pushed her outside. Laura Mae protested, but not loudly, and Eve thought: If she were innocent she'd scream for help.

Dick was waiting on the side veranda. He sprang out of the shadows and gripped Laura Mae's shoulders. "I've had enough of your stupid selfishness," he flung at her. "Tell the truth. Tell it to Eve. She'll be a witness!"

Laura Mae relaxed. In a voice suddenly cool and assured she said, "Why, I'll be glad to tell Eve about it, Dick. Everything Dick told you is quite true, Eve. I *was* with him at the Creole Club. Yancy Calvert *was* drunk and very insulting. He *did* start the fight. Dick hit him in self defense. It was not Dick's fault in any way that Yancy happened to crack his head on a marble pedestal. It *was* an accident. But—" She hesitated, and her voice had a triumphant lilt in it. "I will never tell this to the police, and Eve doesn't dare tell it. Because, if she does, *I* will not only deny it, but I will tell them that she hid you in

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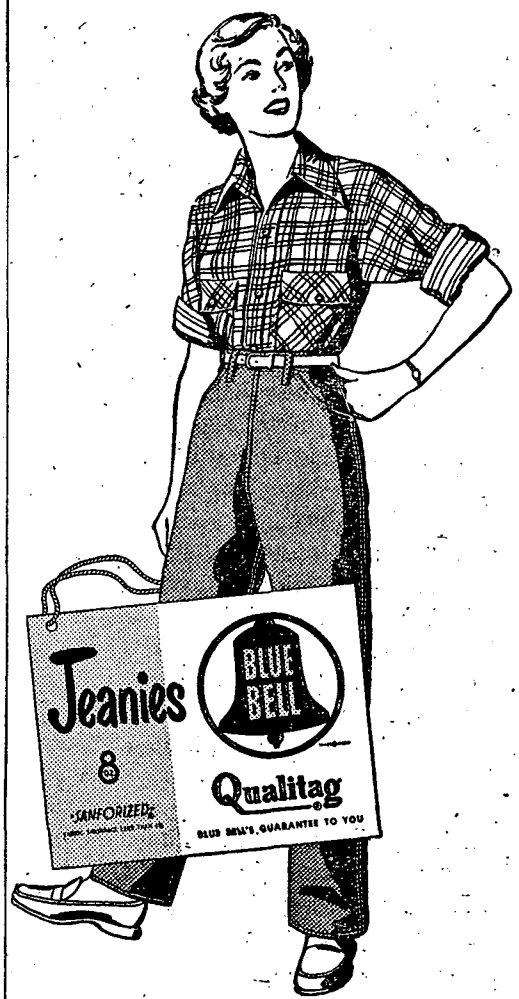

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her house! So this confession is not going to do either one of you any good. You picked a very poor witness, Dick!"

He swore angrily.

"Wait a minute, Dick," Eve said. "I remembered something. Didn't you tell me that Laura Mae told you to come to my house that night? The night of the fight?"

"Yes, she did," he said.

"Then she was trying to frame *me*, as well as you. She was very clever, Dick. She figured that if we found out who she was, neither of us could tell. You had no way on earth of proving that she was the girl with you—she was masked, remember? And if I told, I would be putting myself behind bars for hiding you. It was a neat plan to get rid of both of us. She plans to marry Jon Everett. She can't have scandal, and she believes Jon is a little too interested in me. Am I right, Laura Mae?"

The other girl's eyes glinted with pleasure. "You are absolutely right," she said. "I had no intention of having you as a neighbor after I married Jon. Now both of you can get conveniently lost. There isn't a darned thing you can do about it."

"But there is," Eve defied her. She threw back her proud dark head. "*I* don't run from trouble. I'll go to prison for a year or two, whatever they give me. I'll admit I hid Dick. But first I'll tell the judge exactly what you told me tonight!"

Laura Mae's poise collapsed. "You wouldn't dare! They wouldn't listen to you. They wouldn't take your word against mine. Who is Dick? Nobody. Who are you? A vegetable peddler! That is, you *were*, until the fire burned you out—"

"How did you know about the fire?" Eve demanded. "Unless you set it! That's it—you did, didn't you?"

"What if I did?" Laura Mae cried. "You can't prove that, either. Now I'm going inside, and don't either of you try to stop me. I wouldn't advise it. You see, when I saw Dick at the door here, I called the police. They should arrive any moment now—" Her voice was shrill and piercing.

AS SHE REACHED for the door knob, a tall shadow detached itself from the solid bank of shadows just beyond.

"We will all *four* go inside together," Jon Everett ordered. "You see, Laura Mae, you and Eve were not the only ones who saw La Fitte staring in this door. But when I saw Eve slip out here, I went out the front way and came around. I've been here all the time, my dear. Mr. La Fitte has *two* witnesses to your confession, and I heard your clever little plan to destroy them and marry my money!"

Eve just stared at him, unable to speak. Laura Mae began to sob. Dick grinned with relief. Coldly, his face frozen into an unreadable mask, Jon ushered them through the door just as the sheriff and several policemen burst into the front hall.

Jon managed it very well, Eve thought. Somehow, he reassured his guests, and the four of them, with the police, went into the library.

Questions were fired, statements were made, taken down, and signed. Laura Mae was livid with rage, but she had to sign. Afterward, the police told her she could go.

They took Dick with them, but the sheriff assured him it wouldn't be too bad.

"We ought to take Miss Carrington into custody, Mr. Everett," he said doubtfully to Jon. "After all, she did break the law."

Jon looked very tall, very important and distinguished behind his great oak desk. "I hardly think that will be necessary, Sheriff," he said. "I will personally vouch for Miss Carrington's appearance in court. Will that do?"

"Oh, certainly, certainly, Mr. Everett," the sheriff agreed. Then he grinned. "If I know the judge, he'll give her a good lecture, or a thirty-day suspended sentence, and let her go. After all, she was only practicing Southern hospitality." He winked

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and left before they could thank him.

THE DOOR CLOSED behind him, and Jon and Eve were alone. Jon spoke, his voice controlled, yet rough with hurt and anger.

"Why did you hide him, Eve?" he demanded. "Why did you offer to go to prison to help him? Are you in love with him?"

"No." Her voice was as tired and bleak as she felt. "The poor, the hunted, and the helpless, have to try to help one another. That's all. I believed his story. I felt sorry for him. He's like a little boy to me. Yet I think, if he is freed of this charge, he might become a man. He's had a bitter lesson."

Jon came around the desk. His blue eyes bored down into her tear-filled gray ones. "You've been a fool, Eve. Do you realize that? He might have been guilty. He might have killed you—"

"I know, Jon. May I go home now? Calling me names won't change anything."

"Perhaps it will!" he exclaimed. "You've been a fool about a lot of things. It's time you stopped. I've never lied to you about anything, Eve. Your father *did* ask me not to tell you of the land sale. I paid him more than a fair price. I *didn't* know he wasn't saving the money for you. Then you cast me as the villain in your life. You hated me, you fought me. I'm proud, too. I was too proud to tell you I loved you, to beg your love! But I bought that mortgage for only one reason—to give it back to you, so Carrington would be yours forever!"

Eve faltered, "You—you *love* me? Jon, are you telling me the truth?"

Suddenly she was folded in his arms and his lips were on the black softness of her curls.

"I love you more than my life, darling," he said, gently now. "It's been torture to see you working so hard, denying yourself everything I wanted to give you. Eve . . . I'm not a villain. I'm an honest, a decent man. A man who wants to marry you and take care of you all the rest of our lives . . ."

There was no hatred in her now, only wonder that she could have been so blind, so stubborn, so wrong. And at last her own heart made her admit the truth, that she loved Jon, that if she hadn't loved him so much, she couldn't have felt so strong an emotion as hate for him.

She raised her tear-streaked face to his. "I love you," she whispered. "I want to be your wife . . ."

He kissed her then, tenderly, with the warm and lasting fire of his love; a strong man's love.

Poem to My Heart

by Catherine E. Berry

My past may not be perfect,
My present may be tense,
The reason—I admit it!
I haven't any sense.
My heart is much too trusting,
Too eager to believe;
That love will last forever,
That men will not deceive.
My future is indicative
Of what's been done and said. . . .
Oh heart of mine, for heaven's sake
Learn to use my head!

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A prim Katherine can change to a loving Kate with a kiss or two from a

Dangerous

Just because Steve had asked her to marry him didn't mean she would have to accept.

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Lover

By MILLIE BREECE

CHAPTER ONE

Such a Man

WHEN KATHERINE BROOKS turned into the exclusive Dolphin Surf Club on Miami Beach and neatly parked her Chevvy station wagon between a couple of chauffeur-driven limousines, she didn't give a thought to the FOR MEMBERS ONLY sign on the rail. Not that Katherine didn't have a deep respect for rules and regulations. But this winter afternoon she was too keyed up to note anything so small as a prohibiting sign. She had to see a certain Steve Farley, owner of the Dolphin, and she had to tell him in no uncertain manner that his sixteen-year-old sister, Doreen, was more than the

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Brooks' School for Girls could handle. So would he please come in a hurry and get Doreen?

Opening her black handbag, Katherine made certain the refund check for board and tuition was right where she could find it, and properly made out. That she should double-check herself wasn't strange, because everything in Katherine's life was proper and just as it should be—including herself. To make certain she glanced up at her reflection in the rear-view mirror. Good! Her black velvet cloche was well off her high, wide forehead, and the large mesh veil caught in nicely beneath her chin. Behind the veil was a well-shaped face with delicate, sensitive features, a generous mouth, and large wood-brown eyes that matched her gleaming, neatly groomed hair.

Without conscious enthusiasm at what she'd seen so often in her twenty-two years, Katherine glanced down at her suit. It was a black and white surrah which set off her nicely curved figure. Quite appropriate, she thought, for an interview with a man she'd never met. And after that, for her talk at the Miami Women's Club.

Words of her speech started spinning through her mind readily: *At the present time* she would say, *we have no such thing as a science of biology, but rather a group of many biological sciences dealing with living matter . . .*

Odd how easy it would be to talk before a group of women, Katherine thought as she got out of the station wagon. But talking to a strange man with a questionable reputation was something else again. Why couldn't her mother have handled Steve Farley?

And yet, as she entered the impressive, marqueed Dolphin Surf Club, Katherine knew why. Her mother was in New York attending a convention of private school owners and she wouldn't be home for a week. And inside that time, Doreen Farley could wreck the school!

"Is there something I might do for you, madam?"

The voice startled her. She hadn't realized she'd reached the reception desk, though she'd seen it when she first entered, vaguely, just as she saw most things she wasn't particularly interested in. Now, she saw the clerk—a stout, balding man with a flashy tie and smile.

"Yes, please." She smiled back at him politely. "I'd like to speak to Mr. Farley about his sister. I'm Miss Brooks."

Picking up the desk phone he dialed a number. "Boss? There's a Miss Brooks down here wants to see you about Doreen and—" He jerked the receiver away from his ear, put it back gingerly, then dropped it on the cradle and mopped his forehead with a handkerchief. "He'll see you right away. Those stairs." He indicated them with an unsteady hand. "One flight up, the first door on your left. And good luck, because the boss is in a rotten mood."

So what? Katherine asked herself inelegantly as she hurried up the stairway. *He'll probably be in a worse mood when I tell him Doreen is incorrigible. But that's his business.*

"Come in, Miss Brooks," a deep voice boomed.

Katherine gasped and said, "Oh!" In the same breath she took in the big office with its pale green walls, Venetian blinds, oriental rugs on a jade-green tile floor, and bleached mahogany furnishings. The man was standing behind a flat-topped desk.

"STEVE FARLEY," he said bruskly. "Will you sit down?"

Katherine did, on the edge of a big chair, and really looked at him for the first time. *Physically*, she thought, *he's perfect!* He was tall and rangy and possibly twenty-eight. The gray pin-striped suit would come from a shop on Lincoln Road, she surmised. And his face looked like a bas relief she'd seen somewhere—something in bronze, hard and square-jawed with high

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cheek bones and wide-set eyes. They were dark blue and very bold, because they were moving over her as if she were an exhibit, and he was running big fingers through a wavy mane of raven-black hair.

"Care for a cigarette?"

"No thanks." She managed a little smile. "You don't look like Doreen."

"She's a half-sister." Sitting down at his desk he took a cigarette from an inlaid box and lit it. "My father married a second time. Doreen is fair like her mother. Since she died I've practically raised the kid."

"I'm afraid she's going to be your responsibility again," Katherine said, coming to the point. "We find her quite irresponsible. She does just what she pleases and—"

"Is that bad?" His blue eyes hardened and looked straight through her. "There was nothing in the agreement I signed with your mother saying the kid had to be an angel."

Katherine felt her spine stiffening and she tilted her head. "That, Mr. Farley, is beyond the point. Doreen breaks every rule we have. When I rebuke her she laughs in my face and says terrible things to me."

"I'll bet you a ten spot," Steve Farley said with a wry grin, "she calls you a prim old maid."

Hot color flooded Katherine's cheeks. She was glad she'd worn the veil. "Doreen did call me that," she said stiffly. "Unfortunately, she repeats what she says to others."

"Well," he said blandly, "if it's the truth and you can't take it, why don't you do something to remedy it? Why take it out on the kid and decide she's no good?"

Katherine felt her breath coming in quick jerks. "If I needed your advice I'd ask for it, and you are side-stepping Doreen's behavior. It's disrupting the school morale and we just can't have it. So you'll have

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to take her back. And here's a refund check." She took the check out of her handbag, got up and held it out to him.

MAKING NO EFFORT to take it, he sat there looking up at her with amused disdain in his blue eyes.

"Well?" she asked with annoyance.

"Well, what?"

"This check," she said, trying to keep the exasperation out of her voice, "is for one thousand dollars, half of what you paid my mother last fall when we took Doreen. If you feel—"

"I feel," he exploded, "like tossing you out on your stiff little neck. Doreen is your problem until June. If you don't believe me, take your copy of the agreement I signed down to Judge Clarkson and see what he says about it."

Katherine felt as if she'd run headlong into a stone wall. She'd read about Steve Farley. Hard fisted and shrewd, he'd been connected someway with Florida gambling, but no one had ever been able to pin anything definite on him. Now, he was supposed to be reformed, but she could see he was just as ruthless as ever, just as shrewd. That agreement was full of holes and he could force her to keep Doreen!

And keeping Doreen would ruin the reputation and standing of the Brooks' School for Girls!

That couldn't happen. There had to be a way out. Maybe . . .

"I think you're right, Steve," she said without waiting to weigh the idea that had flashed into her mind. "Supposing I come back this evening when I have more time and we'll talk about Doreen. Maybe you can tell me how to win her confidence and friendship." She smiled at him just as brightly as she could.

"Now you're saying something!" He actually returned her smile. "How about having dinner with me here tonight? Say, at eight."

She had an excited feeling she couldn't account for. "That's just fine, and you may call me—Katherine."

His black brows lifted and he grinned. "Katherine? Nice, but it sounds too prim. I'm calling you *Kate.*"

She felt herself stiffen again. She was on the point of telling him she despised being called that, but what would it get her? "It sounds—nice, when you say it, Steve. And now I must be running along. I'm giving a talk at the Women's Club."

"On love?" He rose, came around the desk chuckling.

He was laughing at her, of course, and she resented it. "On biology, which I teach."

She turned away, and started for the door, realized that he was right beside her, his arm around her waist. Going taut, she tried to pull free, but he swung her around until her eyes were focused on his white, monogrammed handkerchief over his heart.

"Please . . ." It was a frightened whisper.

Evidently he didn't hear it or care. "*Biology!*" he said and his voice held mockery and cynical humor. "Egg plants and ducks and hearts—their functions and classifications—but not a darned thing about what's going on in that heart of yours, or what I have a good mind to do to you." He lifted her veil with a free hand.

"D-don't you d-dare."

She was positive he didn't hear, because his mouth came rushing down and something exploded on her lips and clung there like a sizzling rocket, setting her on fire. It was unbelievable, humiliating that she should feel his kiss at all, or return it. But she did, and then sanity came jarring down on her and she pulled away and stood there with angry tears darkening her eyes.

His eyes were dancing. "Kate," he said grinning down at her, "I thinkg I'm falling for you. Suppose we stop off in the cocktail lounge to celebrate?"

He was rude and impossible, just as

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Doreen was. "There will be no cocktails," she said in a hoarse, throaty whisper. "There'll be no dinner tonight, and in the morning I'll see Judge Clarkson."

The smile went out of his eyes like lights flicked off. "So you don't want to play nice!" His voice was clipped, brittle. "Okay, baby, do it your way. Other people have tried to force my hand and they haven't gotten to first base. You won't either. Now—scram!"

Drawing back from the profanity in his eyes, the hard lines of his face, Katherine shivered. But she was too proud to show how frightened she was.

"Stone Age talk," she said and was surprised that her voice came at all. "I—I might have known you'd l-live up to your reputation."

Her teeth chattering a little, she turned from him and went clattering out of the office and down the stairs. Safe in her station wagon again, she let out her pent up breath. "What a man!" she told her reflection in the mirror as she tried to remedy the damage to her smudged lipstick. "I despise him! I hope I never see him again!"

CHAPTER TWO

Threat to Happiness

AT FIVE that afternoon, Katherine returned to the Brooks' School for Girls in a very discouraged mood. Her speech at the Women's Club had been applauded, but she felt that it had been a very mechanical talk without her usual enthusiasm behind it. If just one thing more went wrong that day, she was sure she'd scream.

When she entered the school office the phone was ringing. Picking it up she said nervously, "This is Katherine Brooks."

"How are you, Katherine? This is Judge Clarkson."

She caught her breath. Judge Clarkson! Elderly, with snow-white hair, a ruddy complexion and clear blue eyes, the judge had been a close friend of the family for years. Now what could he be calling about? "I—I'm just fine, I think, and I want to see you tomorrow, Judge Clarkson, about—"

"Yes, I know, Katherine. Steve Farley stopped in my chambers this afternoon with an agreement signed by your mother. He said you wanted to break it. You can't do it, Katherine. That paper is a contract—an enforceable agreement. It doesn't provide that the misconduct of a student makes it voidable. So you will have to live up to it. And another thing, Katherine—"

She felt defeated, lost. "Y-yes, Judge Clarkson?"

"Steve Farley is a very unusual man. Personally, I like him—"

"Well," Katherine said too quickly, "I *don't* like him!"

"That's what I'm afraid of. I suggest you do everything possible to keep on amicable terms with him. He can do more good for you and the school as a friend than as an enemy. And maybe his sister has some good in her you haven't discovered. Look for it, will you, Katherine?"

Judge Clarkson was that way, always kind and trying to help people. She felt quite humble. "I'—I'll try, and I'll make peace with Steve. But I'll never forgive him for k-kissing—" The word trembled on her lips and she tried to recall it, too late.

Judge Clarkson's deep chuckle turned her face crimson. "So he kissed you, Katherine. Well, well! But I wouldn't hold a kiss against him. You're a mighty pretty girl and if I was as young as Steve—"

"G-good-bye," Katherine said in a strangled voice, and dropped the instrument on its cradle.

Why, of all things! Judge Clarkson talked just as if it were all right for Steve Farley to kiss her. It certainly wasn't. Sinking down on her chair she took off her hat with hands that weren't steady, put it

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on her desk and stared at it a long while.

Why, with a master's degree in biology and a year's experience in teaching and assisting in the management of the most exclusive girls' school on Miami Beach, should she feel so disturbed over a mere man? A man who had run bold eyes over her, called her Kate, kissed her, and ordered her to scram!

A HESITANT knocking at the door cut across her turbulent thoughts, and she called, "Come in."

A petite girl in a plaid suit came toward her nervously.

"Why, Doreen Farley? What in the world is the matter?"

Doreen's startling black eyes, usually so scornful, were wide with fright, and her honey-gold hair was mussed. "I—I'm afraid, Miss Brooks. Nick—Nick Martelli picked me up when I came out of the m-movies and—" Her hand flew to her mouth and she stared at Katherine.

She tried to be calm. Sit down, Doreen and tell me all about it." So this was another violation of rules. The girls weren't allowed to go to the movies except one afternoon a week, and this wasn't the day.

"Oh, Miss Brooks," Doreen said as she sat down on a chair beside the desk. "I—I shouldn't have gone out, but I was mad at you and Steve and—"

"You were mad at your brother?"

"Yes, terribly! He came here this afternoon and told me I had to do everything you said. He made me promise and I did, but after he left I got so mad I cut classes and went to the movies. I'll never do it again, Miss Brooks."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Doreen." So Steve must have talked to her. "Now tell me about this Martelli person. What did he do to frighten you so?"

Doreen wiped away the tears with a twisted handkerchief, and Katherine could see she was under a terrible strain. "Nick Martelli is the head of a big gambling syndicate. Steve used to work for it and that's how I know Nick. He used to come to our house a lot. But Steve isn't working for him any more and Nick is lying low because the heat is on. I mean the Crime Commission and the FBI and the police are trying to break up the big gangs. And Nick knows Steve still has a bunch of receipts and other papers in his safety deposit box at the bank that would ruin Nick if they were turned in. Nick wants them."

"Well," Katherine said, "what has that got to do with you?"

"Well, that's just it! Nick has tried to buy them back, but Steve won't sell. He doesn't like Nick. I don't know why, but if Steve doesn't like you—that's the way he is. So Nick wants me to steal the safety deposit box key and give it to him. He thinks I know where Steve keeps it, but I don't. I—" Her lips started to quiver and she buried her face in her hands.

Katherine felt so sorry for the girl she wanted to cry with her. "Of course you don't know where it is. And it wouldn't be right to take it if you did."

"But y-you don't understand," Doreen wailed. "If I don't do what Nick says he's going to—to kidnap me—and then he can force Steve to do whatever he wants him to do because Steve l-loves me."

Katherine was shocked. She'd never heard of such a thing. And Doreen was her responsibility.

"I'll report this to the police immediately," she said with decision and picked up the phone. But before she could twirl the dial, Doreen snatched the instrument from her hand and put it back on the cradle.

"I'm sorry, Miss Brooks," she said thickly. "But you don't understand. If you reported Nick Martelli to the police and they picked him up, his smart lawyers would have him out in no time. He'd know I talked, and he'd do something terrible, or his hoodlums would and—"

"Then I'll tell your brother," Katherine said firmly.

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Doreen was on her feet instantly. "Oh, please don't, Miss Brooks. I—I promised Steve I wouldn't break any more rules and he'd want to know why I went to the movies. He'd never forgive me. Oh, I wish I hadn't t-told you." She started to cry again, broken little sobs.

Katherine's heart went right out to her. Getting up from her desk she put her arm about Doreen's slender waist and instantly the younger girl clung to her. "Don't be afraid, darling," she said. "Nothing will hurt you. I'll always be with you."

But of course, she couldn't always be with Doreen. "Now, go to your room and get ready for dinner, and don't leave the school again. I'll think of something to do." She kissed Doreen and saw her face light up. "Run along, honey."

BUT THINKING what to do in a case like this was totally different from other problems she'd had to solve. For almost a year the newspapers had run bold headlines about notorious gamblers who flooded Miami and other Florida cities during the winter months, but Katherine hadn't bothered to read the details because she wasn't interested in gamblers. Now suddenly, she was face to face with their ruthlessness, and she had to do something. Not only because she was responsible for a young girl's safety, but because any kidnaping scandal involving a Brooks' student would involve the school. Parents would question the supervision and management and would send their daughters elsewhere. Then what would happen to the school? To her dream of a career in teaching? It was all she really had to look forward to, wasn't it?

If she couldn't call the police or Steve, what could she do?

Judge Clarkson? He was the one.

Dialing his number, Katherine held her breath. But not for long. A tired-voiced clerk told her the judge had left for the State Capitol and wouldn't return to Miami until late the following day.

Now what could she do? The phone started ringing almost the minute she put it down. This would be one of the teachers, of course. But it was Steve Farley!

"Look, Kate," he said quickly. "I didn't give you a good break this afternoon. You have a right to be sore at me. How about keeping that dinner date so I can really apologize? And I do want to talk to you about Doreen and . . ."

She wasn't listening. Or was it her heart's pounding that made it impossible to hear? And then the thought suddenly occurred to her that she should see Steve and tell him everything that had happened. Surely she could persuade him not to be angry at Doreen.

I'll be glad to have dinner with you, Steve. But please understand, I don't approve of men who take liberties."

"Sure, I know, Kate! But you did look mighty nice and I suppose I should have waited until you knew me better. At least until tonight. Only I'm an impatient cuss and—"

"You are quite impossible!" she flamed. "I'll probably stay right here tonight." She wouldn't, of course. She had to see him no matter how distasteful it was.

"You'll miss a lobster dinner if you do," he said without the slightest indication of discouragement in his voice. "And I'm considered a very remarkable dancer. Supposing I call at seven forty-five?"

"Well . . ."

"Fine! Then it's all settled and I'll be seeing you, darling."

Katherine banged down the receiver, snatched her hat and bag, and clattered toward the stairs that led up to the big apartment she shared with her mother. Passing the mirror at the foot of the stairs, she glared at her rose-pink reflection.

"Darling!" she choked.

If it weren't for Doreen Farley's safety and the school, she'd catch the next plane

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for Oshkosh—or some place where Steve Farley couldn't call for her.

CHAPTER THREE

"Will You Marry Me?"

BUT DESPISING STEVE FARLEY was just about as difficult as controlling his willful sister had been. Katherine realized that the moment she answered the office bell that evening and saw him standing there, tall and dark and terribly handsome in a white dinner jacket. He was holding out a cellophane box with a corsage of tiny white orchids.

"Orchids for a princess," he said, running dark blue eyes over her approvingly, "Gosh, Kate! But you look cute in that outfit. I mean it!"

Katherine felt her heart speed up, knew the warm color was flooding her cheeks. The after-five dress she was wearing was a little unusual . . . a black lace skirt with a long-sleeved velvet top cut low on her creamy shoulders.

"Thank you, Steve. And—thanks for the corsage." Her voice was husky as she pinned it to the cuff of one long black sleeve.

How long had it been since any young man had said she looked nice, or brought her orchids? Maybe at the Senior Prom in college. She wasn't sure, but this was real. And the man was Steve Farley—an ex-gambler!

He helped her into his shiny black Cadillac convertible, drove it out Collins Avenue toward the north end of Miami Beach chatting good-naturedly all the way.

Then, just as he swung into the crowded parking lot beside the Dolphin Surf Club, he said, "Kate, I've got six cabanas down there on the beach that aren't rented regularly. Supposing I turn them over to your school—say one day a week? There's a lifeguard on duty and I'll have a bus pick them up whenever you say. Okay?"

Katherine fumbled with her purse. She wanted to say she'd been looking for a good beach where the girls could bathe safely, that she'd be very happy to accept his kind offer. But how could she let the school accept a favor from a man with Steve's reputation? And how did she know there'd be any girls left in the school to take bathing if the school became involved in a kidnaping scandal?

"Hey, gal! Didn't you hear me?"

"Oh! Yes, I heard you, Steve." Right then she didn't like herself very much, and for the life of her she couldn't think of a tactful way of turning down his offer. So she said bluntly, "A lot of parents might object to it. I mean, there are reasons why the Dolphin Surf Club couldn't be considered." Oh, that was stupid!

Steve parked his car beside the marquee and turned to her. His eyes were just as hard and his face just as grim as they had been that afternoon. "Okay, baby. I get you. Now let's have dinner and talk out this Doreen business, or would you rather drive on up the beach to some joint where I'm not known?"

She had that coming to her, and knew it, but he didn't have to look at her as if he could slap her.

"We'll eat right here," she said coolly. Sliding off the seat she started for the door without waiting for him. The sooner she got this over with, the happier she'd be.

BUT ONCE in the grand dining room of the Dolphin, Katherine's resentment died away and she thrilled to her new surroundings. The head waiter had brought them directly to a table regularly reserved, so Steve told her, for himself and his guests. It was in a secluded corner on a raised dais, and from this vantage point she had a sweeping view of the entire room.

"It's really beautiful," she murmured as her eyes moved around the mural-decorated walls with soft, indirect lighting. The ceiling was deep blue with jewelled stars that

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blinked down on the beautifully dressed women and their attentive escorts.

Something came up in Katherine's throat, and she wondered if she wasn't missing something out of life. Every night she had dinner with her mother and some of the teachers, with never a change in the conversation.

"I suppose," she said tightly, "this means everything to you." She made a little airy, inclusive gesture with her hand.

"Yeah, it does!" He flipped the snow-white tablecloth hard and stared at her. "But it wouldn't mean anything to you because all you're interested in is the physical makeup of things. It's different with me. I get a kick out of studying the people who come here—what makes them tick beside an organ called the heart. Some dames come in with their eyes and faces lighted up like torches. They're in love, see? Happy—and it shows. And others have that bored, pain-in-the-neck expression. They don't get a kick out of anything, because there's nothing inside them but resentment, inhibitions, and false school-girl pride."

Katherine shifted her gaze. She was burning up again. Everything he'd said was a slam at her. *If Steve doesn't like you,* Doreen had said, *that's the way he is.* She wished she'd never met him at all, but now that she had, there was something she must talk over with him, and she wouldn't be able to do it effectively if her resentment showed. She made herself smile at him.

"I'm sorry you feel that way about me, Steve. Maybe I am different from other girls you've met. I mean, all of us weren't brought up the same, but fundamentally we have similar emotions and desires. Mine are just submerged by my way of life. Shall we be friends, Steve? I—I'd like it that way."

His blue eyes studied her face and then a twinkle came into them. "You're a funny gal, Kate. How about a cocktail?"

"I'd love it."

His smile was a flash of white as he gave his order to the elderly waiter. "Bring us two martinis and lobster dinners with all the trimmings. And by the way, Jerry—how is your wife?"

"She's coming home tomorrow, Mr. Farley," he said.

"Why don't you take the day off," Steve suggested.

"Oh thank you, sir. Thank you. That's so kind of you. You've done so much already." He choked up and turned swiftly from the table, but not before Katherine saw the happy tears in his gray eyes.

Crazily, her own were misty, too, and she dropped them quickly. She didn't understand Steve Farley at all. He was a hard man, an ex-gambler who had associated with terrible men like Nick Martelli, yet within the hour she'd been with him he'd given her orchids, praised her looks, offered his cabanas to the school, and shown kindness to an employee. None of it made sense, but her being here with him and so disturbed didn't make sense either. She'd better keep her mind on the reason for coming to the Dolphin.

"About Doreen," she said and tried to speak casually, but just remembering the terrified girl brought an undertone of apprehension.

"I'm worried about that kid." His response was instant and his voice serious. "She's had the wrong kind of bringing up. Her mother didn't want her. She died, of course. So I took her to live with me right after the war. That was a mistake, because by that time I was mixed up with some tough mugs who didn't have much respect for laws and regulations. I suppose she thought what was okay for me was good enough for her. So she picked up a lot of wrong ideas, and I figured on counteracting that by sending her to nice schools where she'd meet the right people, but they all shipped her right back to me."

"Then you sent her to—us?"

"Right! Judge Clarkson recommended it. I was hoping you could find the good in

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the kid. In fact, I was just congratulating myself that things were going so smoothly when you called. I'm sorry, Kate, that I acted like a sorehead."

"I guess I really haven't tried to understand Doreen," she said low. "But this afternoon, she showed me another side. "Doreen needs—love. I mean, someone very close to her—like a mother—who would love her and bring out the good in her." When she glanced up quickly at Steve's face there was a strange glow on it.

"THAT, KATE DARLING," he said thickly, "is the thought that came to me this afternoon when I kissed you. Will you marry me, Kate, and take over a couple of people who have both been off the track and need you? Need your love, and lots of it?"

"Now wait a minute," she said in a stunned voice. She would have said more, but just then the waiter returned with the cocktails, and while he spoke to Steve her heart did everything that a normal heart shouldn't do. Why, Steve Farley was out of his mind! He was an ex-gambler. He was bold and hard and amorous. He was everything a husband shouldn't be. And she had to remember that she was Katherine Brooks—cultured, refined and very, very nice. Katherine Brooks who was quite satisfied with a career in teaching.

"Well, Kate," his voice came to her through a fog, "shall we drink a toast to love and marriage? Our marriage?"

Her lips were so dry she couldn't answer him. Picking up her cocktail glass she managed to raise it to her lips, and once it was there, she had no desire to set it down. It seemed to be relieving the chill that had gripped her, her jittery nerves and tenseness. Just because Steve had asked her to marry him didn't mean she had to accept. She would have to be tactful this time in refusing. In fact, she was positive she could think up the right thing to say —in time.

She put the glass down. It was wonderful the way she felt—all light and warm. "I'd just love to dance, Steve."

He smiled at her wryly. "Stalling, huh, Kate? Okay, gal. Let's do this rumba while you think it over."

She smiled back at him. He certainly could tell what a person was thinking. It didn't matter. They were dancing. There was the steady pressure of his hand on her waist, the heady rhythm of stringed instruments. Their tempo became a part of her and she glided off on a dream-like cloud. There were things to be settled later, of course. This question Steve had asked her must be answered. And there was Doreen's problem. But just now, this was heaven.

"You're a good dancer, Kate."

That was Steve speaking to her. She glanced up at him brightly. "Thanks. I had to learn with the girls." She really didn't want to talk, but she added, "You're not bad yourself, Steve. But you told me you were remarkable, remember?"

He grinned down at her. "I'm a modest guy, Kate. That's why you're going to be crazy about me."

He did have a sense of humor, and in lots of ways he was nice, but he just wasn't the man for her. She'd have to make that quite clear to him.

Facing Steve a few minutes later across their table, Katherine made a beginning. *If you really want me*— she'd meant to add, *to help Doreen.* But he was too quick for her.

"Do I *want* you!" he cried out excitedly. "I'll say I do!"

Katherine sank back in her chair utterly weak. She could only stare at him, her eyes filling with tears. He *was* in love with her! It was in his voice and eyes and on his face. But she didn't love him, or want to marry him, and she'd have to tell him.

"You—you don't understand," she said, her throat tightening. "I wasn't talking about marriage. I've never given it a thought. But if I ever do decide that—

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teaching isn't enough—I'll have to be terribly in love with a man to marry him. I'll have to have a deep respect for him, for his work, and his standing in the community." She paused and drew in a deep breath. "Do I make myself clear, Steve? Why there can't be anything between us?"

Steve's face whitened. "Quite clear," he said hoarsely, and snapped the stem of his empty glass between his fingers. "That's the price a guy like me has to pay for what I did, or tried to do. It doesn't matter. I probably have it coming to me, Kate. And I probably had no right to believe that I could go straight and people would forget my past. But I did believe it, and just now when I was reaching out for the one thing that would always keep me in line, the past sneaked in and snatched it right out of my hands." His lips tightened and he spread out his hands in a futile motion.

"I—I'm sorry, Steve. I—"

"Sure you are!" he said bitterly. "So am I—that I had a beautiful dream this afternoon, and woke up too soon. For a nickel I'd chuck everything decent and play along with the rackets."

"Not a bad idea, Farley!"

CHAPTER FOUR

The Flame in Her Heart

THE FLAT VOICE with a foreign accent, cutting in so unexpectedly on the thick silence that followed Steve's outburst, brought him to his feet in a quick, lithe movement.

"Oh, hello, Martelli," Steve said casually. "What's on your mind tonight?"

Katherine froze in her chair. *Martelli!* she thought numbly. *Nick Martelli!* Why had she lost so much time in telling Steve about Nick and Doreen? Now, anything could happen, because Steve was in a black mood. But did it really matter what he did?

Only she knew it mattered, terribly!

If she had never met him, or disillusioned him, he wouldn't have spoken so casually to this Martelli person. He would have had him arrested, without wasting words, for threatening Doreen. And Steve would have kept right on going straight.

"You know what's on my mind, Farley!" That flat voice again! "I don't go into details here. But I just had a call that changes all my plans. I've got to have those papers before eleven tonight. In my apartment, see? And if you don't come across you'll wish you'd never heard of Nick Martelli."

While the man was speaking, Katherine moved her eyes up his stocky, tuxedo-clad figure. When they reached his swarthy face she drew in her breath sharply. Heavy features and still black eyes—cruel and utterly ruthless . . .

"You'd better be going, Martelli," Steve said coldly.

Martelli shrugged broad shoulders. "I said—by eleven tonight." Turning away abruptly he sauntered off through the tables

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as if he owned the place and disappeared through the doorway.

Steve sat down again and stared at the lobsters Jerry had just placed before them. He didn't see them, probably and Katherine was sure he'd forgotten her presence.

She said tensely, "I should have told you about that awful man, Steve. He—"

"What awful man?" He glanced up at her as if he were annoyed with her for interrupting his thoughts.

"Nick Martelli."

He stared at her blankly. "How would you know him?"

"He—he's going to kidnap Doreen if she doesn't give him the keys to your safety deposit box."

"Who told you that?" His voice was a whiplash.

KATHERINE SHRANK before the blazing lights in his blue eyes. But she managed to say, "Doreen told me."

Then she went on to relate Doreen's story. She concluded by saying, "I thought you should know—and do something about it."

Steve's face was white and drawn. "I hadn't figured on Doreen. But I guess she's all right at the school tonight. Yeah, she's all right!" He said that as if he were trying to reassure himself. "Nick wants those papers in a hurry. That means the heat is really on. So he isn't waiting for Doreen to get the keys. He's coming after them with his gang tonight—if I don't show up with what he wants."

"You—you mean," Katherine said in a choked voice, "he'll—use violence?"

Steve was squinting at her. "Sure! Why not? I give him the keys or the papers, or he finishes me off. Only—thanks to you, Kate—I'll be all set for him." He smiled wryly.

But somehow, the smile didn't reassure Katherine. She said huskily, "You might be h-hurt."

"That, baby, is a chance I take. But a chance on anything going wrong. Bring-don't look so scared. If I get bumped off, what do you really care?"

She shook her head wretchedly. She really shouldn't care what happened to Steve. But she did! Only she couldn't explain it.

"Give Nick what he wants," she pleaded huskily. "Please, Steve! Do it for me."

He sat there with a puzzled expression in his eyes. "You're a funny gal, Kate. I don't get you. I—" He paused abruptly as a page boy stepped up beside him. "What is it, Johnny?"

"A Miss Riley wants to speak to Miss Brooks on the phone."

Katherine was on her feet instantly, fear gripping her. Edith Riley was the teacher in charge of the school tonight, and Katherine had given her the phone number of the Dolphin in case of emergency.

"I'm afraid it's about—Doreen," she said hoarsely. Turning, she darted off the dais and ran breathlessly to the phone in the lobby. "Yes, Edith?" she said.

Edith's excited voice came clammering back so loud she had to hold the instrument away. "Katherine why didn't you call me? I've been worried sick. The hospital wouldn't tell me a thing about you. The nurse said it was Mr. Farley who'd been hurt, critically, and was calling for his sister. Of course, I let Doreen go with the intern when he called for her and—"

The phone was snatched out of her hand. "This is Steve Farley. I heard what you just told Katherine. Now tell me, Miss Riley— What did this intern look like and what kind of a car was he driving?"

Katherine was too unnerved to hear what Edith was saying, but she heard Steve bark, "Thanks!" Saw him drop the phone. When he turned to her his face was a hard mask. "Martelli got away with it, all right. That intern was Red Gurlitz, one of his mob. If he lays a hand on that kid—"

"But why did they kidnap her if—"

"That's Martelli's way. He doesn't take

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ing her along with him tonight and holding a gun on her, what else could I do but come across with everything he wants?"

Katherine was too terrified to think clearly. "W-what are we going to do, Steve?"

"You're going back to the school, in a taxi," he said firmly. "And I'm going to Martelli's apartment right now, before he's set for me and this time—"

He turned away without another word and strode across the lobby so swiftly she couldn't catch up with him until he'd reached his car and was opening the door.

Grasping his hard arm she said, "I'm going with you!"

He glanced down at her, his brows arched. "I thought I told you to scram home? This is no job for a school teacher."

"I—I'm going!" Her breath came in quick jerks. "I'm responsible for Doreen. She needs me and—I l-love her." Her lips started to tremble and her eyes misted.

"SAY THAT AGAIN!" he commanded hoarsely.

She repeated what she'd said and added huskily, "If anything happens to Doreen, I—I'd want to die." And that was the truth. The deep protective feeling had come to her suddenly as if her heart was remembering how the girl had clung to her so helplessly, as if she were starved for love!

Putting a hard finger under her chin, Steve gazed down at her strangely. "And if anything happened to me you'd feel pretty rotten, too, wouldn't you, Kate?"

Would she? "I—I guess I would feel terrible." And knew now that she would never be the same if anything happened to him tonight.

Steve said, "Well, just in case Martelli gets trigger happy and I shouldn't see you again. here's something to remember me by."

His face came down quickly and shut out the moon and the stars, and his mouth closed over her lips. This time she didn't try to avoid his kiss. The moment was too tense with feeling for that, too charged with emotions she couldn't understand and didn't care to analyze.

She only knew that his lips were tender on hers, that she was thrilling with a sweet ecstasy, and that she was returning his kiss with all her heart behind it. This moment, she would never forget.

And then it was over and she was in the car sitting in a hazy dream beside Steve. They didn't speak. There was nothing to say. The car sped back down Collins Avenue and finally turned into a side street and stopped in front of a big white stucco apartment house.

"This is Martelli's hangout," Steve said as he switched off the ignition and pushed off the headlights. "I want you to stay right here in the car with your eyes on the clock. I'm giving myself just ten minutes. If I don't come out by nine-thirty, you go into action, see? Drive to the police station as fast as you can and get the cops. Okay?" He reached into the glove compartment and took out a pistol, jammed it down in his coat pocket.

A cold hand clutched at her heart. "Y-yes, Steve. But be careful, please and—" She choked up.

"Sure I will." He gave her hand a little pat and disappeared.

And right away cold beads of perspiration broke out on Katherine's forehead and a hundred doubts assailed her. What if Steve shot Nick Martelli, or Nick shot him?

The headlights of a car drawing in behind Steve's Cadillac flashed in the rear view mirror and went out instantly. She knew the car had stopped, but the motor seemed to be running. Why she ever did it, Katherine never knew. Possibly her sharpened sense of impending danger made her slip down on the floor and straighten out as close as she could to the leather seat. Scarcely breathing, she lay there, listening as footsteps came nearer and near-

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er—then stopped. Her heart stopped, too!

"It's Steve Farley's Cadillac, ain't it, Red?"

"Yeah!" A harsh voice. *Red Gurlitz,* Katherine thought numbly. *The phony intern!* "The boss said he'd come. We'll leave the kid in the car trunk until we find out what the setup is."

Doreen in the car trunk! Katherine couldn't breathe. She didn't dare breathe. If they heard or looked in . . .

"Let's go up and help the boss work Farley over."

"That's going to be a pleasure," Red said and laughed coarsely. "His old man sent me up for five years. I'll never forget how surprised the guy looked when I put that bullet through him." He laughed again, and Katherine could hear them going off toward the door.

She felt utterly sick. So this Red Gurlitz had shot Steve's father in cold blood! It was horrible. Was that why Steve was so hard? Her thoughts spun in circles. She had to do something. Drawing herself up slowly she peeked over the door. The men had disappeared into the apartment house.

Instantly she was out of the Cadillac, sliding into the driver's seat of the big car behind it. The motor was still purring—for a quick get-away, no doubt. But she was the one who was going to get going, and fast. There was no time to let Doreen out of the trunk. But there might be time to reach the station house and get help for Steve.

Backing up and pulling out from the curb, Katherine flicked on the headlights and stepped on the gas. But she hadn't gone three blocks before she knew she was being followed. Headlights of a car directly behind her flashed on and off, and her heart died, her hands froze to the wheel. Then the car was beside her, forcing her to the curb. She had to stop.

"Well!" a cheery voice called out to her. "And where do you think you're going at sixty, young lady?"

For the first time she dared to look at the car and the man who'd spoken to her. And then she let out a breath of relief. It was a police car!

"Sergeant Connor!" she cried and could have kissed the kindly officer and the two other officers with him.

"Well, bless my soul! If it isn't Katherine Brooks. Now what would a nice girl like you be doing in Nick Martelli's Packard, and breaking all the speed laws at that? I've a good mind to tell your fine mother."

"Sergeant, you've got to help me." She told him everything, briefly, and when she'd finished his eyes weren't laughing.

"We'll take care of Martelli and his men," he told her. "You drive on to the station house and get the little one out of the trunk. I'll short-wave the lieutenant you're on your way." He gestured to her with his hand, swung the car around, and went rocketing back.

Before she reached the station, two other riot squad cars shot past with their sirens wide open. And then she was there and the lieutenant, a reporter and camera man were opening the car trunk, snapping pictures and lifting Doreen out.

She was bound and gagged and her black eyes were wide with terror. But once she was freed and saw Katherine, she was in her arms with a little rush, clinging to her and sobbing with hysterical relief.

And Katherine held her there, just as she had that afternoon, too choked to say anything, just crying softly into Doreen's mussed, honey-blonde hair. Books and teaching and the school had meant so terribly much to her, but they were as nothing compared to the wonderful feeling of helping someone who needed her—someone who was dear to Steve Farley.

I'm in love! Katherine thought. I'm in love with him.

The sudden longing was an aching pain gnawing at her heart. What if something dreadful had happened to him? What if she never had a chance to tell him about this—

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fire from heaven—her deep love for him?

Someone was taking Doreen away from her. Someone was catching her in his arms, and she had a feeling she was floating away into complete darkness.

AN HOUR LATER, on the lawn in front of the school office, Katherine was sitting alone on a bench under a coconut palm. For the first time in her life she had fainted from strain and shock, but she had been revived quickly. A kindly police matron had brought her and Doreen home. They had given Doreen a sedative and put her to bed.

Now, with the moonlight streaming down on her through the palm fronds, Katherine was waiting for Steve. Would he ever come?

What had the matron told her above Steve? Yes, that was it: "I've known Steve since he was a little boy. I worked for his family long before Martin Farlay married his second wife. Martin Farley was a prosecuting attorney. In fact, he got me my present job with the police force. He was the same type of man Steve is—determined and a fighter. He hated vice and did a lot to clear up gambling, but one night he was found shot-to death in his office.

"Police suspected Martelli's gang, but they couldn't prove a thing. Steve came home from the Army right after that and he went wild when he found out what had happened to his father. No one could understand what happened to him, for the next thing we knew he was tied up with Nick Martelli.

"Once when he was picked up by the police," she had said, "I had a heart-to-heart talk with Steve. He wasn't proud of what he was doing, but it was the only way he could get close enough to Martelli's mob to find out what they knew about his father's death. He didn't learn anything, of course, and last year he quit Martelli and bought the Dolphin. And since then he's gone straight as an arrow.

"And I'll tell you another thing few people know, Miss Brooks. Practically every cent of Steve's profits goes to welfare work. He's a fine young man. A fine man."

Judge Clarkson must have known about Steve, too, or he wouldn't have liked him. Funny how wrong you could be when you jumped at conclusions without really knowing a person!

A LONG, gleaming-black convertible slid in to the curb. Even before it had stopped Katherine was on her feet, but she couldn't seem to move or breathe.

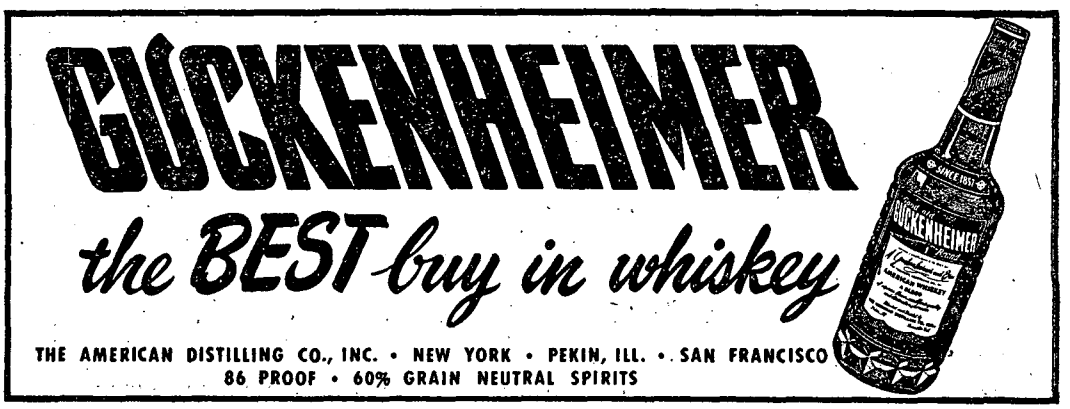
A tall, broad-shouldered man got out.

"Kate!" he cried, coming toward her.

With a little rush she was in his arms again, clinging to him. "Steve! Are you all right?"

Before he could answer, she saw the white strip of adhesive high on his forehead.

(Continued on page 110)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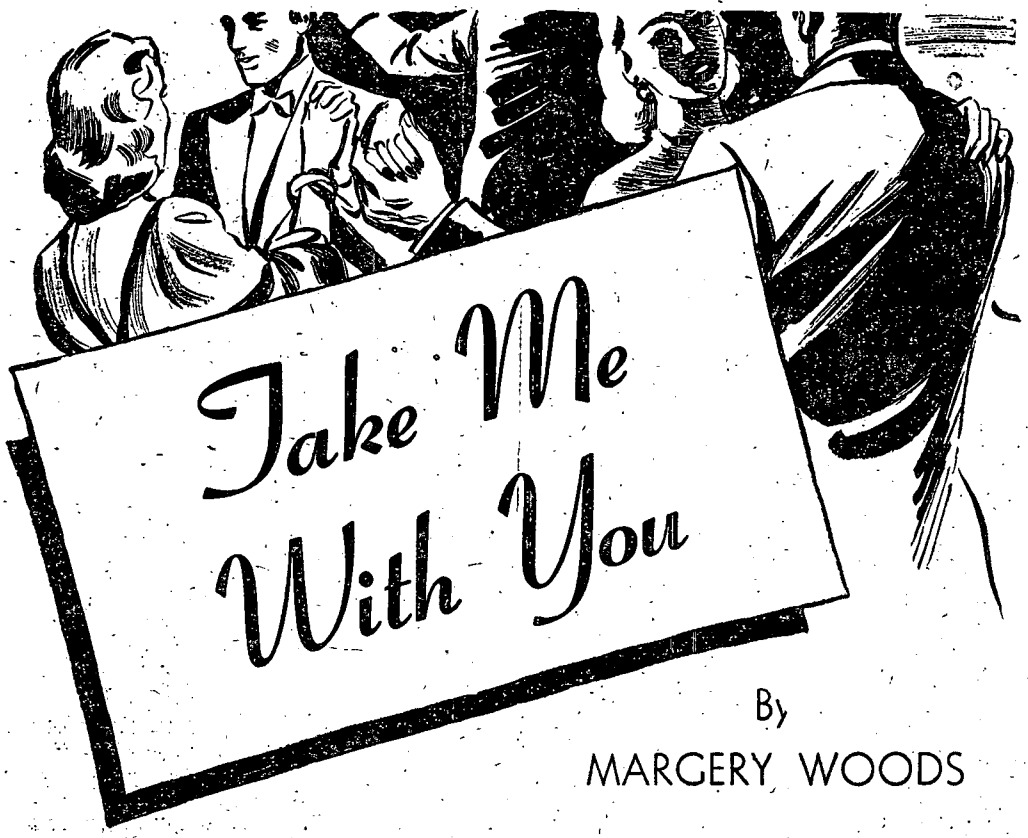

Take Me With You

By MARGERY WOODS

. . . whispered Sandy's heart, but her conscience dictated that she stay out of Doug's life.

SANDY FORSTER'S hand tightened on the phone, and the receiver seemed to give back her own heartbeats. "I'm sorry, Doug," she said carefully. "But this week is so crowded."

Now the voice in her ear was mocking. "And next week too?" it asked, Doug Albright's never-to-be-forgotten voice.

"Well, you know how it is. My appointments—"

"Oh, sure! The hectic life of a New York model. Well, nice talking with you, Sandy."

The phone slid from her shaking hand. She picked it up, listened then replaced it in the cradle. A dead line. A dead love. She buried her hot face in her hands. Three years ago she would have flown to the moon with Doug. But there had been Anne, her sister, always Anne to think of.

Sandy's father had deserted his family, and she couldn't even remember him. At fourteen, she'd lost her mother, and after that Anne took over. Anne was twenty-three then, already married, divorced and cynical.

That next year Sandy grew tall with delightful curves in the right places. An elusive dimple was mixed up with her smile and her coloring was unusual—honey-gold hair, brown eyes, the kind of skin that tans easily.

Eying her sister thoughtfully, Anne would talk of modeling as a profession and sometimes of Hollywood. The sisters lived in a small town near Albany, but at the end of the school year Anne sold their house and they moved to New York. There

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she got a secretarial job and enrolled Sandy in a private school—one of those Broadway deals with the accent on dancing, speech and drama.

Sandy hated the school, hated their dingy, walk-up apartment. But Anne had an idea.

"I want you to be free," she said, and able to earn a good living. I wouldn't trust the best man that ever walked. Look what happened to Mom—and to me." So she scraped and saved, made all of Sandy's clothes, wangled interviews with important people.

AT SIXTEEN, Sandy was modeling teenage clothes. At seventeen, she'd been signed up by an important model agency. In her eighteenth year, she had several movie tests, though none of them took. The sisters moved to a smart apartment, an expensive one, but Anne still made the most of Sandy's clothes, copying originals in smart Fifth Avenue shops. By this time Sandy was having dates, cagey dates. "Take the Stork Club or nothing," Anne counselled. "And never forget that all men are heels."

So Sandy wore startling creations to glamorous night spots. Sandy lured men with her dimple, fended off their kisses, and secretly despised them—until she met Doug Albright at a party. In a month Doug would be heading for the Venezuela oil fields. He was tall to match Sandy's tallness, his hair was rust-red, and when they danced, he drew Sandy into his arms as if she'd belonged there forever.

No Stork Club for Doug. He didn't have that kind of money. They strolled in Central Park, dined in Greenwich Village, generally at Guiseppi's—a bottle of wine on their table, a candle made from the drippings of many candles, a three-piece orchestra and handkerchief-size dance floor. It was Guiseppe himself they really liked. He always greeted them by name, beaming on them—a swarthy, wide-girthed cupid—as if he were making this particular match.

Furthermore, through a door near the bar was a tiny courtyard with one stunted tree. Guiseppi let them use that door to be alone, in each other's arms.

Anne was furious with Sandy for "letting that engineer take up all your time." But grown suddenly stubborn, Sandy defied her sister. So there were long, turbulent kisses in the courtyard, long silences of peace and tenderness, Doug's arms about her, his cheek pressed to her temple. Until a night when he broke the silence and said, "I can't leave you, Sandy. Come with me."

She'd have gone to the ends of the earth with them, hitch-hiked if necessary. But when she told Anne . . .

Oh, Anne controlled herself and was reasonable in a way, not definitely opposing the marriage but asking her sister to wait for at least a year. She mentioned the long years of sacrifice, and then started to talk about a new movie scout she'd contacted.

"Success," she said, "is practically in the palm of your hand. Wait, darling. You owe it to yourself—to me."

Then she cried, and that was dreadful because Anne never cried.

Throughout a sleepless night Sandy struggled with her conscience. She saw Anne sewing in her spare time, wearing the same suit year after year, working at a secretarial job she hated. In another year, Sandy thought, there would be enough money in their joint account to make a nice nest egg for Anne. The next day, wan and sorrowful, she told Doug they would have to wait.

But to Sandy's shocked amazement he saw Anne as completely selfish. Her sacrifices, he said, had been entirely for Anne. She wanted luxury, looked forward to a golden day when she would quit her job, manage her sister's career and bask in reflected glory. Sandy was furious and they shouted at each other. When he went so far as to surmise that Anne's divorce had probably been *her* fault, he was ordered

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out of the apartment in an angered scene.

Bitter, lonely, despairing, Sandy concentrated on her career and tried to copy Anne's cynicism in regard to men. But an old ache that she thought was buried in her would emerge at unexpected moments —with the memory of red wine and a huge, dripping candle, or the glimpse of a man's rust-red head towering above the heads of other men.

With the years Sandy had become a top-flight model, the photographer's darling, the commercial artist's dream, her fashion-show appearances restricted to lush affairs where champagne was served and Paris originals paraded like precious jewels. Anne had about given up Hollywood, but was working on television.

"You can't model forever," she would say, "but if you make a name for yourself in television . . . "

SANDY DROPPED HER HANDS from her burning cheeks. *Stupid of him to phone,* she thought, *after those awful things he said about Anne.* But she could see Doug so plainly, his teasing grin, the way he would frown if he was displeased, love in his gray eyes as he drew her toward him.

When Anne got home, Sandy was fixing lamb chops for dinner. Anne had been a rather pretty girl, but her face had sharpened with the years and impatient lines etched about her mouth.

"Doug's in town," Sandy announced, rubbing the lamb chops with garlic.

Silence, then Anne's controlled voice. "Are you seeing him?"

"No. That's water over the dam." But a wave of color rose to her shining hair.

The next day Sandy modeled for a well-known commercial artist, who was snappy and temperamental. She left his studio, dog-tired, and walked home in the crisp March breeze, her shoulder-length hair hanging free, swung from one hand the black hat box, symbol of her profession. Men ogled her and whistled softly. But she scarcely noticed. In the main she hated men, their hungry eyes and eager hands.

She was nearing the marquee of her apartment house when her step faltered, knees turning to jelly at the sight of wide shoulders in brown tweed, rust-red hair. *Oh no!* And it was too late to run, for Doug was swinging toward her.

"I stalked you," he explained, her hand in his. "How about a cocktail, Sandy? I need your help."

Her help? Puzzled, her pulse riotous, she found herself at a banquette table in a nearby cocktail lounge.

"Play it light," she warned herself. "He's *just a man you used to know."*

But she was noticing his burnt-umber tan, new small lines about his eyes from squinting into the sun, his mouth, curved though not sensuous. Doug was explaining that he was in here on a six-weeks vacation and staying at the Roosevelt.

"Do you like Venezuela?" she asked, sipping her Martini.

"Very much. But it's damned lonely for a single man, unless you go for the native gals, which I don't. That's why I need your help, Sandy. My project on this vacation is one wife, free, white and over eighteen. I thought you might be able to dig up a likely candidate."

He had come straight to the point, she thought, heart hammering. And aloud. "Just . . . any girl?"

"I wouldn't say that. I'd like her to be attractive, domestically inclined, not allergic to heat, and good-humored enough to get along with the other wives. There aren't too many American women down there, and they make their own fun. But in a nutshell, I want a marrying kind of gal. The career type is out."

"Doug Allbright," she cried, her hand shaking as she put down her glass, "of all the preposterous ideas. Choosing a wife to specifications as—as you'd build a house."

"Oh! You mean the romantic angle.

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That'll work out. This riding off on a pink cloud is pure stuff. Take you and me, for instance. That would have been *murder*. You'd be a total flop in Venezuela."

She blazed with fury. "I should say it would have been *murder* with a cold-blooded oaf like you. As for my finding you a girl—try a marriage bureau. This town is lousy with 'em."

She slid from the banquette and headed for the door.

At her marquee he overtook her. "I'm sorry I loused this up," he said contritely. "Believe me, Sandy, I'd work like hell to make my wife happy. But how am I to meet her in the first place when I'm a stranger here? That's why I hoped you—"

"Leave me out of this," she snapped, her hand on the door. "Happy hunting, Doug."

Still raging, she burst into the apartment.

WHAT'S THE MATTER with *you?"* Anne inquired.

"I've seen Doug Allbright," Sandy exploded and launched into the story of Doug's outrageous proposition.

"He's not so dumb," Anne said. "Love's young dream is vastly overrated. I married with stars in my eyes and look what happened. Uh, now that you've seen Doug, how do you feel about him?"

"I despise the lug," Sandy declared, but could not meet her sister's shrewd hazel eyes.

Anne started for the kitchen, then turned back. "Why don't we get him a girl, Sandy?"

"Good heavens! Now *you're* off your stick."

"No, I just feel sorry for Doug, in a way. And he'd be a good catch for some misguided female who's bent on marriage anyway. Um-m-m—let me see—"

"After a moment's consideration she came up with Dot Lennon, a stenographer in her office. "Just the person," Anne enthused. "Dot hates her job, hates New York, plays a swell game of bridge too—"

"That dowdy little thing?" Sandy scoffed. "Doug wouldn't look at her."

"I don't know. Dot has possibilities. I'll ask her over tomorrow evening and have Doug. You have a date with Howard, don't you? Better perhaps if you're not here."

Howard Campbell was a rather serious young man, junior partner in his father's prosperous business, and handy to have around, as a Stork Club type beau—that is. Sandy did have a date with him, but suddenly decided she was staying home.

"If you're hipped on this insane thing," she said, "I want to see what happens. I'll ask Howard to come here. He'd love it."

Anne started to speak, set her mouth and went on to the kitchen.

Sandy was chuckling inside. So far as Dot was concerned, she thought, the evening would be a flop, and it would serve Anne right for her meddling. The idea, of course, was to get Doug married. Anne was still afraid of Doug.

WHEN SANDY DISMISSED DOT as a dowdy type, she hadn't counted on Anne. Dot's best features were dark hair and violet-blue eyes. She arrived the next evening in a sleek violet dress with unpressed pleats to minimize her rather broad hips.

"Anne shopped with me," she explained, "on our noon hour. D'you like my hair, Sandy? I hated having it cut. But Anne said—"

What a chattery little creature, Sandy thought, as the girl bubbled on. Then the doorbell was ringing. Sandy was on tiptoe with excitement as she answered it.

"Hi!" Doug greeted. "Nice of you to have me." And let his eyes stray over her shoulder toward the girl he was to meet.

Within five minutes he was telling Dot about Venezuela, concentrating on her. Then Howard came, a spindly young man

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bearing presents—two bottles of Scotch. He joined the Venezuela talk, and was apparently impressed by Doug, for he suggested meeting him for lunch.

The Scotch was served, and Doug and Dot played the record machine, enthusiastically discovering mutual tastes.

"I'm not jealous," Sandy told herself. "That would be plain silly." But the evening was a flop—for *Sandy*.

"Doug and Dot clicked beautifully," Anne said when their guests had departed. "They're dancing tomorrow night. She told me when she was getting her coat. I'll have to skip lunch again and help her buy a formal. That girl has no more clothes sense than a chipmunk."

"She doesn't need clothes sense," Sandy snapped, carrying glasses to the kitchen. "Not with *you* around."

IN THE NEXT THREE DAYS Sandy heard nothing from Doug, and everything seemed to go wrong. Her taxi was stalled by traffic, making her very late for an appointment, and some nitwit mixed up the size on a Paris original she was to model. She squabbled with her favorite photographer. Finally, Doug phoned.

"Dot's a swell sport," he said cheerily, "and has dancing feet. I've met another girl too, through friends in Venezuela. But so far Dot has the edge."

"And of course," Sandy said sarcastically, "both are simply drooling for you."

"I wouldn't say that," he chuckled. "But I might sell myself to one or the other. Oh yes, have you heard from Howard Campbell? We lunched together, and he wants to double-date Friday night. I'll take Dot. Hope you're available."

She hesitated, biting her lip. Then, "Lovely, Doug. I'm so fond of Howard."

Anne was displeased by the double date. Dot and Doug, she said, should be left to themselves. Sandy ignored the objection.

"I'll wear my chartreuse net," she said. The chartreuse was new, a devastating, ankle-length affair.

"Save that for something important," Anne snapped.

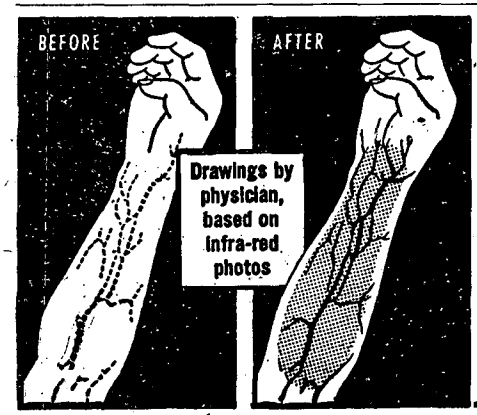
But Sandy wore the chartreuse and the four went to the Starlight Roof. She had forgotten how out-of-this world Doug was in evening clothes. Though she hadn't forgotten how he would draw her into his arms, slowly, firmly, as if she'd belonged there forever. Dancing with Doug, to a rush of memories, a lump in her throat, the clock turned back three years.

"LIKE OLD TIMES," he remarked, echoing her thought.

"Yes. Isn't it?"

"First love, candlelight and wine. Oh well. We can laugh at it now."

She could have struck him, but he put his cheek to her temple and the anger melted. *He remembers,* she thought. *Perhaps I could get him back. After all, he was an-*



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gry when he said all those things about Anne. He didn't really mean them.

"Get him back!" her heart hammered against her ribs.

Dot and Sandy were in the powder room. "Doug's an angel," Dot said, around her lipstick. "Uh—just what is his job in Venezuela?"

"He's a petroleum engineer."

"Only an engineer? I thought he might be some kind of executive. I mean, he was telling me about the houses the company built for its men, and he especially described the assistant superintendent's and I got the idea that—"

"So an engineer wouldn't do," Sandy interrupted scornfully.

"I didn't mean that. He probably does quite well down there at that. Don't you love this dress, Sandy? Anne's a wizard at—"

Little stinker, Sandy thought, not listening. *Doug's income is all she thinks about.* Then it occurred to her that Doug was a stinker too, the cold-blooded ape! When they returned to the table, the men were discussing food.

"I want to give an informal dinner," Howard explained. "The family's in Florida so we'll have the apartment to ourselves. I broil a mean steak, but you girls will have to come in on the salad and stuff."

"I'm sure Dot would love to help you," Sandy said, suspecting that the mercenary little creature couldn't so much as fry an egg. "Why don't you have stuffed baked potatoes? Doug adores them."

"I'll do what I can," Dot agreed uncertainly. And the dinner was set for Sunday evening, the servants' night out.

Around midnight they left the Starlight Roof. "Where now?" Howard asked.

"How about Guiseppi's," Sandy inquired, "down in the Village?"

"Wonderful!" Doug exclaimed. "Good old Guiseppi." And he hailed a cab.

I'm nuts, Sandy thought, her face hot, hands icy . . .

Guiseppi's hadn't changed a bit, the huge, multicolored candles, wine bottles on the tables, and out of the dimness Guiseppi himself peering in delighted recognition.

"Mr. Albright!" he exclaimed. "Miss Forster. Or is it *Mrs. Albright now?"*

"No," Sandy answered. "We missed the boat on that one. Rather, I missed it." She dared not look at Doug.

Dot had grown suddenly quiet, and Howard was talking more than usual. Then Sandy was dancing with Doug—dancing at Guiseppi's, a trip to the moon in Doug's arms.

"I wonder," she murmured, "if the courtyard is the same too."

"Let's find out," he said, and guided her toward that closed door, their private door.

They were alone, music in the distance. Stars glimmered through the branches of that one tree, and Sandy was shaken with memories.

"Just the same," Doug murmured, and hands on her hips, brought her close to him. She looked up at him in a surge of longing and expectation. For a moment they stood like that, an almost unbearable moment, frightening in its intensity. Then his mouth was on hers, a long kiss tumbling through her like the swift flow of a mountain stream.

He lifted his head, then dropped his hands.

She could hear his breathing, swift and shallow like her own. She felt suspended in time. This was now . . . and eternity.

Finally, he spoke. "Remembering is pleasant," he said, "but impractical. Better fix your lipstick before you go back to Dot."

Sandy hated him. In the small powder room she cried with hate. Or was it love?

In bed that night, she cried again, baffled by this new Doug. *He's afraid,* she thought. *I hurt him so terribly. But he hurt me too, misunderstanding Anne as he did. Well, I'll let him alone after this.* Then she was thinking of tomorrow, the eternal rat-race. And for what?

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For the Sunday night dinner, Sandy wore a sleek little dress—golden-brown for her eyes—elegantly suited to Howard's penthouse. She and Anne took a cab to Park Avenue.

"Howard," Anne said, "has invited some man for me, an unlikely creature no doubt. If I can't get away from him, give Dot a hand, will you? She doesn't know beans about cooking."

They found guests in the huge dropped living room, with Howard circulating a tray of cocktails. Since Doug wasn't around, Sandy decided he must be in the kitchen. But Dot was alone there, mashing potatoes that had been scooped from their baked shells.

"They're all lumpy," she wailed, "and I've broken my slip strap. Oh, dear!"

Sandy took over and told Dot to go to the powder room and repair the broken strap. She was piling the fluffy mixture back into the shells when Doug came in from the terrace.

"Heh!" he exclaimed. "I thought Dot was the cook."

"I'm pinch-hitting," she explained, new warmth spreading through her. "Where've *you* been?"

"Getting a socialite's view of the big city. Brother! What a layout this is." He watched her top the potatoes with cheese, bright hair swinging forward with her bent head. "A model that can cook," he said.

She turned to him, trembling, her knee-joints melted. "I've a pretty good disposition too, Doug. And I take tropical heat in my stride."

He chuckled, "Too bad you don't play bridge."

Sandy felt as if she were suffocating. "I could—learn," she murmured.

He lifted his hands toward her, dropped them again. Anne was pushing through the terrace door. "Oh!" she exclaimed, darting a shrewd glance from her sister to Doug. "Uh—where's Dot? Has she mixed the salad?"

The dinner was good but no thanks to Dot, though if Doug knew, he didn't seem to mind. He held Dot's hand under the table. Later when they played records Sandy danced with Howard. Doug beamed at them approvingly then drew Dot into his arms, slowly, firmly. Was he really falling for that mercenary little chit? Sandy felt empty, terrified . . .

AT BREAKFAST next morning, Anne remarked that she was seeing a doctor today on her lunch hour.

"Doctor?" Sandy repeated incredulously. Anne was never ill.

"One in our building," Anne explained. "I've been so tired and listless of late that I thought I'd have a checkup."

Sandy advised more sleep and forgot the whole matter. She was wrapped in her own problem—the enigma of Doug Albright. What would have happened last night if Anne hadn't barged into the kitchen? Was he really honestly interested in Dot?

The day was the usual rat-race, rush here, rush there—"Turn your head a little, Sandy. I want to catch that dimple." Was she a girl or a robot?

By the next morning she was desperate, and set forth in a cockeyed little brown hat to top off her golden-beige suit. Twelve-thirty found her in the lobby of the Roosevelt where she called Doug on the house phone, holding her breath until he answered.

"I found myself in your neighborhood," she explained, "and thought maybe you'd buy lunch."

He came down at once, so dear in his gray flannels and maroon tie.

"*You* order," she said, discarding her menu.

Doug's hands, faint odors of shaving lotion, his *mouth* and the surging memory of that kiss in the courtyard—of many kisses long ago.

"What have you been doing with your-

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self?" Sandy asked, as the waiter left them.

Doug's face clouded. "Digging up reservations for Venezuela. They're having labor trouble, so pf-f-t goes my vacation."

"How awful! You mean—right away?"

On Thursday at two, he told her, by Amalgamated Airlines. And this was *Tuesday.* She seemed to die inside. But his eyes had no message for her, his voice was impersonal as he told of his difficulties in getting reservations.

Though Sandy rarely smoked, she asked for a cigarette, holding his hand as he lighted it. Were those *his* heartbeats or only the echo of her own? He drew back, remarked that he'd seen *Call Me Madam* last night. *Stop it, Doug,* she wanted to scream. *Look at me. Talk about us.*

He paid his check when she finally voiced the question uppermost in her mind: "Oh yes. How about Dot?"

"I don't know. This cuts our romancing awfully short. What do *you* think, Sandy? Are Dot and I right for each other?"

"If you're in love," she murmured breathlessly.

"We'll attend to that angle," he said, taking change from the waiter's silver tray.

Sandy was heartsick, frightened, too proud to beg. He went to the sidewalk with her.

"Nice seeing you," he said, as they shook hands. "Goodbye, Sandy."

She walked away through her tears, a tall, lovely girl with a black hat box.

THAT EVENING, Anne again mentioned the doctor, explaining that she'd had a blood count and would see him again on tomorrow's lunch hour.

"You'd better take a vacation," Sandy advised, still unable to think of energetic Anne as really ill.

The day after tomorrow Doug would be gone. He wanted a wife. She wanted him. But she had chased him really, with no results. *My career is to blame,* she decided. *Once he saw a girl under the tinsel. Now he's afraid to look for her. Well, then, why not scrap the career?* A reckless notion, also impractical. With appointments months in advance she couldn't walk out on the agency just like that.

In the tortured night hours, however, Sandy remembered Anne's doctor talk and got a new angle. After her sister left the next morning, she phoned the agency. Last night, she said, she had "simply gone to pieces," and the doctor had ordered her to rest for at least a month. So here she was—*in bed.*

There were dismayed sputterings at the other end of the line then sympathy and at last resignation. She hung up, clammy with nerves, also conscience smitten. But in all these years this was the first time she had let them down. And she *was* sick—for Doug's love.

For fear she might bump into someone from the agency, Sandy put her hair into a knot, wore dark glasses and one of Anne's hats. Amalgamated Airlines was her first stop, and as she had feared, there wasn't a seat on Doug's plane. She used flattery on the young man behind the counter, and was promised a cancellation, if there should be one. No use even asking for a plane to Venezuela, as a passport would have to be arranged. But she could do that in New Orleans then follow Doug—if he wanted her.

Trembling desperately, she phoned him. He was not in. Never mind, there was shopping to be done. She bought sports clothes, summer formals, a couple of wide hats, having the purchases sent special delivery. At three-thirty, she finally got Doug.

"Sandy!" he exclaimed. "I was thinking about you."

"Then how about a cocktail, or dinner if you—"

He couldn't make the dinner but agreed on the cocktail, promising to meet her in that lounge near her apartment house. So he was dining with Dot! Well, no matter.

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She'd see him first, and hadn't he admitted that he'd been thinking of her? She had been tired but hurried home on winged feet.

IN THE FOYER, she avoided a heap of boxes then stopped in amazement. Anne was home, stretched on the sofa.

"What happened?" Sandy asked. "What's the matter?"

"The doctor—" Anne began, "Sandy. Why all those parcels?"

"I've been shopping."

"But you had them sent *special.*" . . . .

"I know. What did the doctor say?"

"He sent me home. Says I must stay in bed. He suggested a sanitarium, but I'd rather be here."

Sandy's knees gave way and she sank into a chair. "How awful! I never dreamed—Not a nervous breakdown?"

Her sister nodded, wearily closed her eyes. "I'll try not to be much trouble," she murmured.

Anne in bed—alone. *Oh, Doug! What shall I do?"*

She got to her feet. "Don't worry, Anne. It'll be all right. I—have to go out for a few minutes. You lie still."

In the bedroom mirror she was very pale, her brown eyes enormous. Mechanically, she discarded Anne's hat, combed her hair, renewed her lipstick. *Anne's worn herself to a nub for me. I've been her only thought for years. And if I left now, the shock—in her condition. But I must go.*

If she did go, Sandy thought, Anne couldn't stay here. She'd have to be in a sanitarium. And the *expense*—with no income—Numb with despair, she left the apartment.

Pressing the elevator button, she decided to tell Doug, ask him to wait. But—no. That wouldn't work. Three years ago Anne had separated them. Doug would refuse to be burned twice at the same fire . . .

He was waiting at a banquette table.

"Hi!" he greeted, his eyes leaping to hers. "You're late. I might have left."

"I've been on the phone. Something came up. Really, my life is a rat-race. And now I have to hurry. This television thing—" she added lamely.

His face closed against her. "Price of success," he said.

The cocktail could not penetrate the chill within her. His hands, his beloved face . . . And she was losing him forever. A cocktail, polite conversation, then he walking her back to her apartment house.

There she made a stiff smile for him. "Send me a postcard, Doug."

"I'm damned if I will. Good-bye, Sandy. Here's hoping they see your face on a million television sets."

In a fog of misery she watched him go, that last bitter remark in her ears.

He does love me, Doug. Come back!

That evening Howard phoned. He and Dot, he said, were putting Doug on his plane tomorrow with luncheon first, at

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Twenty-One. If Sandy could make it—

She couldn't, she told him, "Thank you. Howard."

THE NEXT MORNING Anne slept. Sandy had breakfast then walked the streets aimlessly. To the agency, she was ill; to Anne, working. A ludicrous situation if it hadn't been so tragic. The day was overcast, attuned to her own despair, the future gray, Anne ill, Doug gone, and the old rat-race going on and on.

By eleven she was exhausted and trudged back home. Anne wasn't there. Sandy was frightened, remembering dreadful things that happened in nervous breakdown cases. But presently she heard Anne's key in the lock, her brisk step.

"Sandy!" she exclaimed. "You home?"

"Just between appointments. Where have *you* been?"

Anne sank on the sofa. "I went downstairs for a breath of air, but I won't do it again. I'm so—tired. Sandy, some man called from Amalgamated Airlines. Said he'd had a cancellation. What in the world have you been up to?"

Sandy shook her head, said it must be "some other Forster." So her reservation had come through. What irony!

A little before twelve, who should drop by but Dot Lennon in a new suit and last night's orchid.

"I took the day off," she explained. "Too bad you can't go to the plane with us, Sandy. Anne, darling. How are you? You can't imagine the hullabaloo at the office when you phoned yesterday afternoon. The girls just couldn't believe it. I mean, you'd seemed just fine at that birthday luncheon for Helen."

"Birthday luncheon," Sandy repeated. "You mean, *yesterday?*"

Dot nodded her head and bubbled that she was going to miss Doug terribly. Anne's face had sharpened and she refused to meet her sister's eyes. At last, Dot chattered herself out of the door.

"So," Sandy said scornfully, "you went to the *doctor* on your lunch-hour."

"Right after lunch. I took extra time and—"

"You're lying, Anne Forster. You haven't been near a doctor. You suspected that I was still in love with Doug, and this doctor talk was your ace in-the-hole in case we showed signs of getting together again."

Anne sat up. "Sandy. Of all the preposterous ideas."

"All right then. The doctor's name. I'll phone him."

"This is—his day off."

"His name!" Sandy repeated furiously. "You can't give it, can you? Because he doesn't exist. Yesterday Dot must have told you Doug was leaving. You came home early afraid I'd do something desperate. You found those special delivery packages and went into your act. What a fool I've been!"

Anne wilted momentarily then sprang to her feet. "Darling. I did lie. But for your sake. You'd never—"

"For *my* sake!" Sandy interrupted. "It's been *yourself* all along. Oh, how right Doug was! You wanted luxury, wanted to shine in reflected glory. But never mind. I'm going to Venezuela." And she flew for the telephone.

She started for the bedroom, had a new idea—an amusing one—and dialled Twenty-One, asking for Doug.

"Doug!" she cried. "The oddest coincidence. I have a friend who's taking your plane. You'll like her—not a bad looking girl, amiable disposition, handy with pots and pans, used to be a model but decided she wasn't the career type."

"Sounds interesting," he said guardedly, "what's her name?"

"Uh, Jane—Jane Hitchcock. Tall, blonde gal. She'll be looking for you."

SANDY HAULED BAGS from the closet, packed to the accompaniment of Anne's tears, Anne's mounting rage. Then

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into the golden-biege suit, the cockeyed brown hat.

When the airline limousine reached the airport, Doug hadn't arrived. In fact, Sandy had some dreadful moments of fearing he would miss the plane. But at last she saw him—a tall, beloved figure, rust-red hair. Dot and Howard were hovering nearby while Doug checked his luggage. Now, he was stuffing the checks into his wallet and Sandy's knees buckling, her mouth dry, as she went to him.

"Hi!" she greeted. "Surprise."

"So you made it after all," Doug said, bitter lines about his mouth.

"Oh yes. In fact, I'm going to New Orleans—on business, *personal* business."

Their eyes locked, Dot and Howard's startled questions falling about them like rain. Then the flight was being called and the four headed for the gate. Howard was silent. Dot, her voice grown shrill, kept reminding Doug to write. At last Sandy and Doug were walking together toward the plane.

"That girl?" he asked. "Ex-model."

"Me, Doug. I—I'll learn to play bridge."

He pulled her to one side, and his hands bit down on her shoulders. "You mean, you'd give all this up for *me?*"

"If you want me. Oh, Doug! *Please want me.*"

He pulled her close, bent his head to hers and a kiss, long, tender, urgent, blotted out the confusion around them.

Then a sharp voice spoiled the magic. "Look here, you two! If you're taking this plane—"

An obliging stewardess shuffled the passengers so that Sandy and Doug could sit together. Removing her topcoat, he lightly pinched her wrist. "To make sure you're real," he said.

"You're the one who hasn't seemed real. Doug. That cockeyed idea. Did you really mean it?"

"I had to see you," he explained. "But after I *had* seen, and realized that you were right on top, I was scared off. I liked Dot and thought we might make a go of it. When a man's lonely, second-best seems better than nothing."

Then he might have married Dot! Sandy slid her hand into his, breathing a prayer of thanksgiving. "You'll have to leave me in New Orleans," she said. "There's all this passport business and getting a reservation and—"

"Never mind, sweet. I'll have twenty-four hours there—for a honeymoon. After that you'll be busy, buying things for the house and—"

"Tell me about the house, Doug."

"Well, the company does pretty well by its assistant superintendent. There's a big living room and—"

"Doug!" she cried. "*You're* the assistant superintendent? Why didn't you tell me?"

"I didn't know you'd care." Then he kissed her, a quick, hard kiss.

Some Lips Were Made for Laughter

by Gwen C. Meza

Some lips were made for laughter—but not mine!
This mouth I rouge today in brave pretense
Was molded into sorrow's firm, hard line.

Some lips were made for laughter—but mine grew
To taste the saltiness of endless tears
And cry out in my heart's great need of you!

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By ANNE FOWLER HILL

Spotlight on Love

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Terry had to fight for her love against a blinding star who bewitched Dex's heart.

TERRY Walton watched Dexter Mitchell quietly as he lay stretched out beside her on the Santa Monica beach. She swallowed the dry ache in her throat. Of all the eligible Navy men stationed in the Long Beach area she would have to fall in love with Dex.

Big and bronzed, he was, and the breathless excitement she always felt when she was near him streaked through her again. In his lieutenant's uniform he had charm enough, but in the blazing flowered swimming trunks he now wore, his dark good looks were enough to send any girl's heart into a nosedive.

He lifted himself suddenly and reached into the pocket of his sports shirt for an envelope of snapshots. "Marlene sent

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them," he said, handing some of the pictures to Terry, and the dazzled look she had learned to dread came into his dark eyes.

She examined the pictures casually, but a cold feeling closed in around her heart. No wonder Dex was in love with Marlene Grayson. If she was gorgeous in a snapshot, what would she be in person?

Dex was absorbed in the other prints and Terry gazed at the ones in her hands, but her eyes were unseeing. As far as Dex was concerned, she might as well be in a rocket ship en route to the moon.

She had known him for four years, having met him when he was fresh out of Annapolis. Her brother Bim had brought him home for a weekend visit to their cattle ranch near Lake Arrowhead.

TERRY WAS seventeen then, an eager, zestful seventeen. Dex had looked at her healthy tan, dancing hazel eyes, curly brown hair tucked haphazardly under a flowered bandanna, and called her "Tuckie."

That week-end had been a bit of paradise. Whenever she and Dex circled the lake on horseback or danced at the Lodge, she felt as though she were skimming the fleecy clouds that raced over Lake Arrowhead.

It hadn't been the same with Dex. He fell in love with the green-and-gold land with its blue lake and big trees, but not with Terry. She knew that to Dex she was only part of the scenery. But because she was young and romantic, she dreamed dreams that someday he would fall in love with her.

She hadn't seen him again until a month ago. She had a secretarial job at an aircraft plant in Santa Monica and had run into him unexpectedly at a party. She'd thought she had buried those teen-age dreams, but they flared again at sight of his big, vital body and quick glad smile with the hint of stubborness around his jutting jaw. He gave a low whistle when he saw her, and his eyes went from her slim figure in the airy white lace dinner dress to her hair tied high on her head with a pink velvet bow.

"Why, Tuckie, child, you've grown up!" he'd said appreciatively.

Because of her racing heart, she hardly heard what he said after that. Something about his destroyer having docked at Long Beach that afternoon; something about seeing Bim last week in San Diego.

She nodded at his mention of Bim. He had recently been attached to the Jet Squadron at the North Island Naval Air Station—one of the few Annapolis graduates to belong to the hazardous squadron of Jet Furies.

"Bim told me you were here," Dex went on, "but he didn't tell me you were such a charming woman."

Terry winced now, remembering. Dex didn't really think of her as grown up even yet. To him, she was only the young sister of his best friend. She had realized that more and more when she thought of him during the past month.

She shared a cottage at Santa Monica with Jeanie Harper, who also worked at the aircraft plant, and Dex spent a lot of his off-duty hours at the cottage.

Instead of decreasing, Terry's love for him had grown deeper, more poignantly painful, during the hours they were together. They swam in the heavenly blue water, danced in gay night spots, or sat at home discussing books and music, or listening to the radio. Terry found, to her wonder, that they could talk or sit quietly enjoying each other's company. She found, too, with an aching emptiness growing in her heart, that Dex spent a lot of time telling her about Marlene Grayson.

The more he told her about this girl, who was a New York socialite, the more Terry's torment grew. He might as well have said, "You're sweet, Tuckie, but you're a friend, a pal, someone with whom I can talk about Marlene."

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Dex's voice broke sharply into Terry's thoughts. "Marlene's flying out next week to see me." He ran his fingers through his hair. "And my destroyer's liable to be called for escort duty any time."

Terry lowered her eyes so he could not read the shock in them. *Marlene in California close to Dex.* She said faintly, "She may arrive before you leave."

"That we don't know," he said worriedly. He took her hand and her pulses raced at the touch of his strong, lean fingers. "That's what I want to talk about."

Terry stiffened. *Don't ask me to meet her, Dex. I don't even want to see her.*

But that was what he was asking. He said, "If I'm not here would you meet her, Tuckie?"

I can't! I can't! she thought wildly. But his eyes were searching hers and she managed what passed for a smile. "Of course, Dex."

He let go her hand and lay back on the sand. "Now I can relax. There are lots of Navy wives who would meet her but," he regarded Terry with undisguished fondness, "you're sort of family, and I'll feel better if you're looking after her."

Sort of family. Oh, Dex, if you only knew.

"I hope you like her, Tuckie," he went on eagerly. "She's one of those brilliant, vital people."

And she's gorgeous to look at, Terry thought.

"I made reservations for her at the Miramar here at Santa Monica," Dex went on to say. "It's my favorite of all favorite hotels out here."

Terry gazed at the aquamarine water. She had spent many evenings dancing with Dex at the Miramar. Because of him, it had grown to be her favorite of all favorite spots too.

Dex's chin set purposefully. "When I see Marlene, I'm hoping she'll consent to marry me."

Terry was proud of the way she held her head high and echoed his hope brightly. But the empty feeling inside her grew to a sick ache. She had it straight at last. *Dex did plan to ask Marlene to marry him. And Marlene wouldn't turn him down. No girl could!*

He talked on about Marlene and as the dazzled look grew more dreamy, Terry stared at him, a sudden, sharp intuition seizing her. Did Dex really love Marlene Grayson, or was he just fascinated by her beauty and brilliance? Something like not being able to see the forest for the trees? A stubborn hope tore through her. She had seen it happen before. Perhaps when she saw Dex with Marlene she could tell whether he really loved her . . .

But at his next words, her hope died. It seemed he had talked with the chaplain about marrying them, and the ceremony would be performed at the Little Church of the Flowers in Glendale.

Terry didn't let him see her hopelessness as he talked on about his plans. When she could stand it no longer, she got up, saying as gaily as she could, "I don't know about you, but I'm starving."

He sprang up. "How about the Miramar or the Beverly Wilshire?"

Her smile was an effort. "When there's cold fried chicken in our ice box?"

"Well, why didn't you say?" he laughed, and steered her double-time across the beach.

There was no one at the cottage, and Terry's heart lifted a little when she read Jeanie's note saying she'd gone out to dinner. At least, she'd have Dex to herself tonight. Perhaps for the last time.

Dex arranged the chicken on a platter while Terry cooked frozen vegetables, tossed a green salad, and warmed some rolls. They ate on the small balcony which overlooked the ocean, and Terry caught some of Dex's gaiety, chatting and laughing with him, forgetting for a time the pain in her heart. But watching how eagerly

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he ate the strawberry dessert, she thought longingly, *I'd like to fix meals like this for you from now on.*

A LONG TIME after Dex left, Terry sat staring into the darkness. Music drifted to her from the night spots along the beach, and the breeze stirred gently in the nearby palm trees to sift flower scents through the soft night. Terry tried to shake off her unhappiness, but it persisted like a cloying gray fog.

Jeanie Harper, tiny, vivacious and blonde, came home finally. She dropped into the porch swing and let out a deep breath. "Am I tired! Been dancing with the Navy all over Southern California."

At Terry's silence, she glanced up. "You look like you've been dragged from heavy seas. What gives?" Then shrewdly, "Dex, huh?"

Terry let out her breath. "He's liable to leave any day."

"What's a little escort duty?" Jeanie chided. "He'll be back."

"Marlene Grayson's coming to California," Terry went on dully. "If Dex isn't here he wants me to meet her."

"Men!" Jeanie exploded. "Of all the—" she broke off with an exasperated sound. "I knew Marlene when I lived in New York. She was always running around with some new man; always having her picture in the papers." She spread her hands. "Headlines, spotlights, that's Marlene."

"She's very beautiful," Terry said.

Jeanie shrugged. "If you like the tawny-gold type. But she's so restless, so keyed up all the time."

Terry held back a sigh. "Dex is in love with her."

"Maybe yes, maybe no," Jeanie said. "I used to see them together in New York. She was possessive, but it looked to me like he was just dazzled."

"He's dazzled to the extent that he's going to ask her to marry him when she comes out here," Terry said knowingly.

Jeanie lifted her shoulders. "To mention an old cliché, darling, there's many a slip betwixt cup and lip."

Terry looked down at her hands. "There won't be any slip with Dex. He sets a course and follows it."

"Anybody who looks at his chin knows that," Jeanie admitted airily. "But just the same, there might be a slip."

To evade further useless argument, Terry went inside. In bed, she lay for a long time trying to free her heart of its longing for Dex. It's no use, she told herself over and over. He loves Marlene. He's told me so in a hundred different ways. Oh, why does he have to be so stubborn and so darn sweet? And why do I have to love him so much?

She tried to tell herself that she would meet someone else someday; that there wasn't just one man in the world. But her heart knew better. There would never be anyone but Dex for her.

CHAPTER TWO

Bewitched

DEX HAD BEEN gone a week when Marlene arrived. Terry, with a corsage of green orchids, went to the airport to meet her. The instant she saw Marlene descending from the plane, her worst fears were realized. Marlene, the center of a laughing group, was everything Dex said she was—and more! She was positively radiant. No wonder Dex was dazzled.

Numbly, Terry watched the beautiful girl swing down the steps, flashing her brilliant smile. There was a tall, distinguished-looking man beside her. Terry stared, wide-eyed. A dozen newspapermen surrounded her, and flashlight bulbs began to explode.

A bystander pointed to the distinguished man, who was obviously her escort. "That's Joseph Manning, the big movie director.

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He and that crowd of picture stars are returning from New York."

Terry swallowed as she watched Marlene basking in the battery of flashlights. She was dressed in white and had the slender, smooth finish of an actress. Her hair, tawny gold, was in an upsweep with a puff of white feathers for a hat. Her eyes were topaz with tangled lashes, and her skin was a light, creamy terra-cotta. Her high, sharp cheekbones and wide scarlet mouth could not have been more tantalizing. But Terry noticed her eyes. They were restless, brilliant, plainly seeking the limelight. *The sun and its satellites,* Terry thought resentfully. *Oh, Dex . . .*

Suddenly she wanted to dash away. Her beige shantung dress seemed almost dull in comparison with Marlene's expensive white outfit. But she had promised Dex.

She lifted her small chin and went forward, pushing through the crowd until she stood in front of Marlene.

"I'm Terry Walton," she said with what graciousness she could manage. "Dex asked me to meet you."

The other girl examined her coolly, and said in a superior voice, "The *little* Walton girl. Dex wrote me about you."

Terry tilted her head and to her surprise she heard herself saying, "I've seen a lot of Dex the past month."

Amusement touched Marlene's lips. "So he wrote. Good of you to look after him." But there was a world of implication in her condescending smile.

Terry recognized the warning and felt almost ill with misgivings. *Marlene has the reserve sign on Dex. And she wants all the others, too.*

It was an effort to say, "Dex thought I might help."

Marlene laughed. "How like him." She made a wry face. "As if I can't look out for myself." She turned and introduced Joseph Manning and the others, saying gaily, "I've had the most exciting trip. Imagine meeting all these intriguing people," she gushed charmingly to Terry.

Terry had never felt so out of place in all her life, but she handed the orchids to Marlene and said, "Dex sent them, he has made reservations for you at the Santa Monica Miramar."

"I know," Marlene said. She smiled at Joseph Manning. "But I've decided to stay at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Mr. Manning says that's closer to things." She added, as she moved away with the noisy group, "Sweet of you to come, though."

Stunned, but keeping her smile, Terry watched them leave. Now that she had seen the way Marlene reached out for any man she wanted, she felt even more frustrated. *Marlene was all wrong for Dex. Only he would never see it.*

Terry set her lips. There must be some way to lift his blindfold. But how? She *had* to think of something.

But the events of the next week caused the possibility of that something to all

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but vanish. Marlene was too clever, her magnetism too great, for Terry to match wits with her. She showed it in her every action.

The newspapers featured her as if she were the star of the film company. Joseph Manning was beside her in every picture.

Jeanie Harper threw the papers down one evening. "Marlene always has to have a fuss made over her," she fumed. "Just like in New York." She narrowed her eyes. "But this time it looks as though she's working on Manning to land a movie job. She's just the one to do it, too." Jeanie clucked. "They don't come smarter than Marlene."

Terry shivered. Her friend was right. Marlene would have her cake and eat it too. She'd take a movie career and she'd take Dex!

DEX RETURNED unexpectedly the next week. Jeanie announced it when she came in from work.

"Dex is back," she said, kicking off her pumps. She didn't look at Terry. "His ship docked yesterday," she went on, still looking away. "Guess he's been too busy with Marlene's parties to drop by."

"I guess so," Terry answered evenly, but a wave of despair went through her. *He hadn't even telephoned.*

Jeanie kicked at one of her pumps. "Why don't you drop a few salvos yourself—not just leave him for Marlene?"

"Salvos?" Terry repeated uncertainly.

Jeanie nodded vigorously. "You know, make with the glamor. Pretty clothes, chatter. Make Dex *notice* you."

"Do you think—" Terry began.

"You could *try!*" Jeanie broke in. "We could start this very night. There's a dance at the Ambassador. Marlene's going to be there with Dex. Some sort of movie affair." She nodded. "We'll call in the Navy. Jimmie Cleary and Pete Decker are still around. They're always trying to date you. We'll reserve a table."

"I don't know," Terry hesitated.

"Well, I know," Jeanie said. She dashed for the clothes closet and pulled out a gold lamé dress. "You've never even worn this. With my amethyst costume jewelry and purple orchids you'll be a knockout." She pushed the dress at Terry. "Give him a few broadsides with this. The old one-two, darling," she directed, and went to telephone Pete Decker.

"Pete almost whooped at the chance to go tonight," she reported back to Terry. She inclined her head. "Even after the way you've treated him."

Hope, despair, determination, uncertainty warred in Terry as she dressed for the party. Determination won. It wouldn't hurt to try. The old one-two!

She swept her shining brown curls high on her head. It gave her a smooth, *chic* look, and the gold dress, long and clinging, did the rest.

Jeanie raced out for some orchids and pinned the purple flowers on Terry's shoulder. "Perfect," she exclaimed. "You'll out-glamor Marlene. No doubt about it."

Later, at the Ambassador, Terry caught some of Jeanie's excitement when a group of Navy men swarmed around her. Her eyes sparkled and she was gay as she went from one pair of arms to another. But the gaiety left her when she looked over her partner's shoulder and saw Marlene and Dex join Joseph Manning's party.

Marlene was more tawny looking, more exquisitely beautiful than ever in the miles of floating nasturtium-colored tulle. Terry set her lips. Her gold dress had seemed wonderfully sophisticated—until now.

Dex looked as handsome as ever, but his mouth was tight with unaccustomed lines. Terry looked away. *His eyes on Marlene were still dazzled.*

Terry was glad she had time to mask her face with a smile before Dex came over to speak to her. But it was all she could do to keep her eyes cool on his and say, "Glad you're back, Dex."

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It was harder to keep her smile when he looked at her gold dress and said teasingly, "Why, Tuckie, are you trying to sink the whole Navy? Or is it that good-looking Pete Decker, who won't keep his eyes off of you?"

Just you, Dex, she wanted to say. Instead, she laughed brightly. "Just a little old one-two." He had noticed Pete Decker. Could he be a tiny bit *jealous?*

His next words told her how wrong she was. "I would have dropped by to see you girls, but there've been so many parties."

You girls, Terry thought, trying not to let the hurt show.

Marlene drifted over to them. "And there're more parties to come," she said, taking Dex's arm, her eyes flashing over Terry with their deprecating look.

TERRY DANCED with the other men at their table, the ache in her heart almost unbearable. It was worse when Dex asked her to dance. She stumbled twice, but he didn't seem to notice. When the music ended, he took her outside and they strolled up and down the terrace. He sniffed the soft, fragrant air.

"Lord, it's good to be back." He smiled at her. "We had some good times together, didn't we, Tuckie? I thought about them a lot when I was out in the middle of the ocean."

A rush of gladness filled her. He had liked those quiet evenings. Then the gladness faded.

He was saying, "And what do you think of my Marlene?"

It was all Terry could do to say, "She's everything you said, Dex."

He stopped, looking down into Terry's eyes. "You're my best friend, Tuckie. I want you to like her."

Terry swallowed the hot ache in her throat, and he went on, his voice vaguely troubled. "Marlene's got an idea she wants to go into the movies. Joseph Manning's promised to give her a screen test in a day or two."

The stubborn hope came back to Terry. *If she goes into the movies, he won't marry her. Perhaps . . .*

And then Dex pulled a jeweler's box from his pocket, and Terry leaned against a palm tree to keep him from noticing her shaking.

"I'll talk her out of the movies with this," he said confidently. He opened the box and a stone glistened from the gold-encrusted miniature of his Annapolis ring. He smiled at Terry. "Do you think she'll like it?"

"Of course." Terry's voice had a smothered sound. "Any girl would."

He said, amused, "I don't want *any* girl. I want Marlene."

Terry stared at the ring because she could not look at Dex. "Will Marlene really give up the movie idea? She seems keen on it. She mentioned it as soon as she got off the plane."

"I haven't had a chance to talk seriously with her about it, but she's half promised to forget about it."

Terry felt a little as if the end of the world had come. Marlene would promise anything to have her way. She wouldn't lose a single chance to be in pictures for anything.

And stardom would mean more to her than marriage. Why couldn't Dex see through her?

Marlene's voice called to them from the arcade, and Terry was glad even for her appearance. Anything to keep her misery from showing.

Back inside, she was even more sure she was right about this spoiled rich girl who made a stir wherever she went—scintillating, sparkling, every gesture, every word calling attention to herself. The spotlight. The sun. And Dex's eyes never left her. He was bewitched. Enchanted. And there wasn't anything anybody could do about it.

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CHAPTER THREE

Forgive Me My Kiss

BACK AT THE COTTAGE, Terry said to Jeanie, "Thanks for helping me try." She stepped out of the gold dress. "But the broadsides were all duds."

"Men!" Jeanie said eloquently. She shrugged. "The world's full of them. You've got a dozen in love with you. Look around, honey."

Terry escaped to bed. What a child she'd been to think she could compete with Marlene. She swiped angrily at her tears. Dex didn't even know she existed.

She managed to get through the next two days. After work the third day, Terry waited for the bus, her eyes misty, her mind busy with thoughts of Dex.

A horn honked and she looked up startled to see him motioning to her from the curb. She ran toward him, her heart racing. Just the sight of him does this to me, she thought. I must get over it. I must.

Assuming a gaiety she didn't feel, she said lightly, "Home, James," and slipped in beside him.

He smiled at her, but underneath the smile she detected a tenseness. Her breath quickened. Perhaps he'd had a showdown with Marlene—found out that she had no intention of giving up the movies. But that wasn't possible. She glanced at his set profile, his jutting jaw. Something was wrong!

As they skirted the ocean front, she made casual conversation, telling him brightly about the day's work. She broke off finally when she realized he wasn't even listening. She thought of Bim and tried another tack.

"I had a letter from Bim," she said brightly. "He may fly up this way soon. He couldn't say when, of course."

"I know," Dex said, and relapsed into the odd silence.

At the cottage, he helped her out of the car. "Marlene flew over to Palm Springs for a couple of days with those movie people," he said tersely.

So that was it!

He took Terry's arm. "May I come in?"

She covered her misery with a light, "We'll see what we can find to eat." *He wants to tell me something*, she told herself, *but he doesn't know how. I'll have to wait. If it's about Marlene . . .*

Jeanie was out again, and when they had cleared the dinner things away, Dex said abruptly, "Let's walk."

They strolled along the palisades. The moon shimmered through the heavy dome of palm and eucalyptus trees, throwing black and silver shadows on the path. The sea breeze brushed them gently, and the surf sang its ceaseless song.

At last, Dex sat on a bench and pulled Terry down beside him. She gazed at the moon-silvered ocean spread out below them. "It is beautiful, isn't it, Dex?"

He didn't seem to hear. He cleared his throat. "There's something I must tell you, Tuckie."

She waited, her blood racing. *Had Dex found out that he didn't love Marlene?* She took a deep breath.

"Yes, Dex?"

"It's Bim. He had an accident today. His plane crashed off Long Beach."

Terry's heart swelled so suddenly with fear she had to brace herself on the bench to keep from falling. "Is he—" she began, and couldn't go on.

"Not dead," Dex assured her swiftly. "But he's in the hospital."

Tears of relief spilled from Terry's eyes. "I thought for a moment—"

Dex put his arms around her. "I've been with him all afternoon. He's still unconscious, but the doctors assured me he'll pull through."

"Thank heavens," Terry breathed, a sob escaping her.

Dex stroked her hair. "Don't cry, Tuckie." Then wonderingly, "I never saw you cry before."

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She clung to him, and he let her cry it out on his shoulder. At last, he lifted her head and looked into her eyes.

"Don't worry, little Tuckie," he said unevenly.

Then, abruptly, his lips came down on hers and she forgot everything but the feel of his arms, his tenderness. She answered the demand of his lips, all her pent-up emotions released at long last. She didn't know how long the kiss went on. There was no measure for such sweetness.

Dex sprang to his feet suddenly, and the world crashed back into place. "I shouldn't have done that! I haven't the right. You see, I—"

With stunned awareness, Terry grasped for her pride. She gave a tight little laugh.

"Yes, I see. You felt sorry for me. The news of Bim hit me pretty hard for a second." She lifted her chin. "I shouldn't have given way so . . . so childishly."

"Of course, you should have," he said firmly. "It's just that—I forgot myself for a moment." He stared at her with an odd, tense look. "Forgot Marlene."

Terry said as evenly as she could, "Let's forget it, Dex. It never happened."

He still had the strange, new look. "Yes, Tuckie." He straightened his shoulders. "As soon as Marlene comes back, I'm going to give her the ring."

Terry heard herself saying, "I hope you'll be happy, Dex."

When he told her good night at the cottage, he said, "The minute Bim regains consciousness, I'll take you to him." He held her close for a moment. "Bim's going to be all right."

"Yes, Dex," she said between tight lips. "Thanks for everything."

In her room, she threw herself on her bed and stared unseeingly at the ceiling. She must put Dex out of her life. She couldn't carry him around in her heart for the rest of her life. She pressed her hands over her eyes, remembering how completely she had kissed him. She must pretend it never happened, that it was all a dream.

NEXT MORNING, JEANIE awakened Terry by thrusting the morning paper into her hands. Headlines leaped at her:

DEX MITCHELL MAKES DARING RESCUE. SAVES NAVY PILOT BIM WALTON

Breathlessly Jeanie read the details. Terry heard only part of what she said. Bim had been operating from a carrier two miles off the coast when a wing of his plane came off. Before bailing out he radioed for help and Dex Mitchell had directed the rescue from his destroyer . . .

Jeanie stopped for breath, and Terry sprang out of bed. "Dex told me about Bim last night, but he didn't say a thing about rescuing him."

"He wouldn't!" Jeanie said. She pointed to the headlines and shook her head. "Little Marlene won't like him stealing the limelight."

All morning at work, Terry waited for Dex to call, jumping each time her phone rang. At noon, he came to take her to the hospital.

"Bim's okay now," he assured her. "Insisted I bring you to see him."

"I saw the morning papers," she said. "Why didn't you tell me you rescued—"

"Routine," he interrupted. "Can't see why the papers had to make such a fuss."

How like him to play himself down!

When they left Bim he was pale but smiling. Except for a slight concussion and a broken arm, which would keep him in bed for a few days, he was as sound as ever.

Outside the hospital, Terry tried to thank Dex, but he changed the subject gaily. "I'll wait for you after work," he said. "We'll pick up a steak on the way home."

"Of course," she said and tried to smile. *He was coming to see her because Marlene was away.*

But all afternoon she waited impatiently

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for five o'clock. Marlene couldn't keep her from one more evening alone with Dex.

But Marlene did. She was with Dex when he stopped for Terry. Terry never remembered how she managed a greeting, but she must have, because Marlene smiled at her coolly and said.

"When I read about Dex being such a hero, I flew back ahead of the others."

She wanted to get in on the glory . . .

Terry told Dex she could take the bus, but Dex protested. "We're going right by the cottage. I can't have dinner with you" he added apologetically, "because Marlene has some other plans."

All the way to the cottage, Terry kept up a bright chatter, and when she got out of the car, Marlene slid closer to Dex.

"I'm having a party tomorrow night at the Beverly Hills Hotel. You must come, of course." She slanted a smile at Terry. "We'll have a surprise for you."

Terry held on to her purse to keep from shaking. *This is it, the announcement party. She wants to show me how completely she owns Dex.* "I'd love to," she said with forced grace. "Thanks."

At the party the next night Dex was nowhere in sight. But Marlene, in glistening jade-green satin and flashing diamonds, was the center of all eyes. She stayed close to Joseph Manning, smiling at him, holding his arm.

And then, suddenly, the noise and chatter ceased. The orchestra broke into *Anchors Aweigh.* A spotlight leaped for the door as Dex, looking a little bewildered, entered the room. Applause rippled after him as he made his way to Marlene's side.

Hot tears burned back of Terry's eyes. Dex was a hero and the Navy was his life. He needed a wife to share that life with him; one who would gladly follow him from port to port, or wait patiently at home for him to return from sea duty. A real Navy wife. Terry's heart lifted. If Dex could not persuade Marlene to give up the movie career he might realize how wrong she was for him. He *might!* There was still hope.

Everybody crowded around Dex to congratulate him. And then it was Terry's turn. She murmured something and tried to move away, but Dex had an odd look in his eyes and he started to put his arm around her.

Marlene's laugh stopped him. "How quaint," she said, and Terry stepped to one side. It was nonsense to think that Dex's look was anything but brotherly.

She felt his glance follow and she talked to Pete Decker with increased animation. *Dex wasn't unhappy. He was tired, that was all.*

When she saw him taking Marlene outside, she knew she was right. Dex was probably slipping the ring on Marlene's finger this very moment.

She danced with some of Pete's shipmates, wondering how she could move when she felt so frozen inside. When she could, she made an excuse and slipped to the powder room. She had only got inside when Marlene flew through the door.

She said furiously, "Dex thinks he can order me around the way he does his crew." It was evident that she was too angry to care with whom she talked. "He said I made a show of myself tonight. Imagine! After all those heroics for him."

Terry glanced at Marlene's left hand. And then her heart began to hammer with a wild, glad beat. Dex's ring was not there.

But the gladness died when Marlene said arrogantly, "So we've quarreled. He'll probably run to you to pick up the pieces. But when I want him back, he'll come."

Pick up the pieces . . . She held back a shivering breath. *Rebound.*

Somehow she got out of the room and went to ask Pete to take her home. She glanced around as they left. Dex wasn't in the room.

AT THE COTTAGE she told Pete good night and watched him drive away.

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She started up the steps when she heard a creaking noise. She stopped with a startled gasp as Dex got up from the porch swing. A sharp pain stabbed through her. *How soon he had come to pick up the pieces.*

She dropped into the swing because she was shaking. But she wouldn't be second choice. She wouldn't be!

Dex sat down beside her. He held her chin in his hand and searched her eyes. She couldn't move. But she must send him away. Now, before it was too late. Before her heart was broken forever.

It was too late! His arms were around her and his lips were on hers. She tried not to answer his kiss, but it was no use. She might as well have tried to stop the world from turning on its axis. She melted against him and her heart soared to the stars.

At last, he looked down at her and whispered, "You do love me, Tuckie, darling."

Hurt pride burst through Terry. "Love," she scorned, jerking from his arms. "You don't know the meaning of the word."

He leaned back from her, his face tense, white in the subdued light.

"Marlene told me you quarreled with her tonight," Terry rushed on unheedingly. "You'll go back to her when she wants you to. She said so."

Dex seized her shoulders. "And you believe that!" He shook her. "I've had enough temperament for one night. Don't you give me any more."

Pride held Terry's head high. "I don't want to see you again, Dex." *She must send him away while she still had the strength.* "Ever!"

He searched her eyes. Somehow she managed to keep them cool, steady.

"If that's the way you want it," he said, and strode down the walk.

Through her tears she watched him climb into his car. And then she covered her face with her hands and shook uncontrollably. If only he had told her he loved her before he quarreled with Marlene. Now, she could never believe him.

"Oh, Dex," she whispered. "Oh—"

"Oh, what?" Dex asked gently, sitting down beside her.

She jerked up her head. "I thought you had gone . . ."

"I had to come back," he said quietly. "I had to try once more."

Bewildered, she searched his eyes, and they answered hers steadily, honestly, making her believe him.

He crushed her against him. "You don't want to send me away, Tuckie." He laughed exultantly. "You couldn't have kissed me that way if you had."

Tenderly, he pressed her head against his shoulder, and she lay against him, her defenses down at last. She let out a long breath. "It was just—just that I thought you had come to me to pick up the pieces."

"I can't blame you for doubting me," he said huskily. "I've been so blind. It was you I thought of all the time I was away. Our happy times together."

He buried his face in her fragrant hair. "Marlene has to have noise, glitter, applause. It means nothing to me. We'd make each other miserable." He held Terry closer. "The night I kissed you I began to see it was you I wanted, and today I knew. But I couldn't tell you until I had straightened things out with Marlene."

Terry lifted her head. "I didn't think you would ever *see* me, Dex." Her eyes found his. "I've waited so long."

"It was you all along, darling," he said softly, "only I let a dazzling light steer me off course for a while." He smiled happily. "But there won't be any more shoals. I love you too much."

He kissed her then, long and tenderly and completely. All the doubts left her heart with his arms around her, his lips on hers, and once again she had the joyous feeling of skimming the fleecy clouds that raced over her beloved California skies.

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Record Romance

By Buddy Basch

ARTIE SHAW WAS BORN Arthur Orchowsky in New York City on May 23, 1910. When he was very young his family moved to New Haven, Connecticut.

His musical career started at the age of thirteen. He might not have become one of the world's finest clarinetist's had it not been for the fact that one of the music stores put a most startling announcement in one of their windows that fronted on the town's main street: "We will give free lessons with the purchase of every clarinet. Come in now and take advantage of this wonderful bargain." Artie pressed his nose against the window, all the time fingering the money someone had given him for his birthday.

There wasn't much question in his mind. Artie had always loved music. He walked into the music store and bought the clarinet, along with the promised music lessons, which were given by the man who owned the store. Artie became so amazingly proficient on the instrument that after five lessons his teacher had to admit there was little else he could show the precocious Shaw. So Artie went elsewhere for additional lessons and training. After a short period his new teacher declared that Artie had picked up all the necessary know-how and was a complete master of the clarinet.

At the age of nineteen, Artie Shaw was the solo star with Irving Aaronson's Commanders, and two years later he was an outstanding clarinet soloist with both the CBS and NBC networks in New York. He was featured on all the top radio shows.

The first time he really came to the attention of the public was in 1936. (Up until then he was what is known to the music trade as a "musician's musician.") That year he appeared in a show at the Imperial Theater, and his solos were acclaimed the high spots of the program. This led to the organization of his own band. There were a succession of Shaw bands to come, but this was the beginning.

One of the reasons for the tremendous success of the band was the fact that Shaw arranged it so there was a string section for dancing. In 1938 Artie recorded things like *Begin the Beguine* (which sold eight million copies) and his fame was established. Since then he's made musical history on wax. Who can forget great discs such as *Frenesi, Dancing in the Dark, Smoke Gets In Your Eyes, I Cover the Waterfront, Lady Be Good, Concerto For Clarinet, Traffic Jam, My Blue Heaven, Night and Day, Lover Come Back To Me,* and many others.

Most people agree that the pre-war Artie Shaw orchestra was one of the finest ever

ARTIE SHAW
MGM Records Star

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organized. However, he is now touring with a band that comes close, and features his famous Gramercy Five. Where he got that name we forgot to ask, but probably it came from his Gramercy 5- telephone number.

The Gramercy Five did some of the most sought-after jazz records in existence. An interesting thing about them is that a harpsichord was featured first time in jazz history. It was played by Johnny Guarnieri, now a noted pianist and bandleader.

DURING WORLD WAR II Shaw had a long hitch in the Navy. He lived with a batch of sailors from every part of the country and from every walk of life and had an opportunity to learn their likes and dislikes in popular music.

Artie is a perfectionist. "Almost perfect" has no place in his way of thinking. If something's good enough to do, Artie wants it done right. He has a remarkably alert and provocative mind. He reads a great deal and likes to discuss world problems.

At one time he gave up all his musical plans, bought a home in the country and began to write. This was more than just a passing fancy. Page after page rolled out of his typewriter, but he threw most of them in the wastebasket. He didn't give up though. He kept writing until his money ran out.

Afraid that his friends in the music world would laugh at him, he refused to return to music, his first love. Instead he took a job building roads. When the job came to an end he went back to the music world. However he hasn't given up his desire to write, although it will probably be some time before he puts away the clarinet again.

And that's just the way it should be. Anyone who plays the "licorice stick" the way he does should hang on to it!

READERS: Who's your favorite recording star? Send in your suggestions, and watch for the story. Drop a postal card with your suggestion to: **Buddy Basch,** New Love Magazine, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.

Record Reviews

APPETIZING ALBUMS

Hymns by The Mariners has the group singing ten of the most familiar hymns with sincerity, warmth and humility. They sing them straight and beautifully. The Mariners are known for faithful renditions of great tunes and this is bound to be one of their best-selling items in these troubled times. It's on four records. (Columbia).

Call Me Madam features Dinah Shore and the original Broadway cast doing songs and dialogue from the smash-hit musical. The album has five twelve-inch records and features all the great songs and wonderful scenes from the show. Featured along with Dinah, are Paul Lukas, Russell Nype, Galina Talva, Pat Harrington, Ralph Chambers and Jay Velie. Musical direction is by Jay Blackton. (Victor).

Mary Martin in Anything Goes and *Mary Martin in The Bandwagon* are two albums with all the greatest music of Cole Porter and Dietz and Schwartz. The first is a show from 1934 with tunes like *You're The Top, Anything Goes, I Get a Kick Out of You* and *Blow, Gabriel, Blow.* The second is of 1931 vintage and features *Dancing in the Dark, I Love Louisa* and *Where Can He Be.* Each album is worth having and hearing over and over. (Columbia).

Pérez Prado Plays Mucho Mambo gives us the "Mexican Glenn Miller," as he's been called, playing six wonderful mambos, four of which he has written himself. If you like the mambo, you'll like this set by Pérez Prado. (Victor).

BEST SINGLE BETS

★ **BENNY GOODMAN—NANCY REED (Columbia)**
Oh Babe!

I'll admit we tampered a bit with the billing, but Nancy Reed didn't get any billing on the label and she's the thing that makes the record. Her clear, sweet voice and tasty handling of the lyrics are the discs highlights.

★ **GEORGIA GIBBS (Coral)**

If I Were a Bell
I'll Know
Looks Like a Cold, Cold Winter
Ballin' the Jack

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Get Out Those Old Records
I Still Feel the Same About You

Here are some sides by Her Nibs, Miss Georgia Gibbs. Great stuff!

★ **PETER LIND HAYES (Decca)**

Disc Jockey Blues

This one includes a plug for his friends "Gordon and Sheila" (MacRae) and others. New Yorkers will recognize the jockeys he's kidding.

★ **KAY BROWN (Mercury)**

Baby Me

"The Station House Band" accompanies Kay in a cornball, old-time style thing. There's fine tempo and singing by Kay. You'll probably hear more from her.

★ **BENNY FIELDS (MGM)**

The Lullaby of Broadway
For Me and My Gal

One of the old-timers of show business shows he has the stuff to be top talent today. Benny does an excellent job. I prefer *Lullaby*, but a lot of charm comes through on both sides. Hope he'll do many more for MGM (and us).

★ **TONY MARTIN (Victor)**

Tamberina
Once Upon a Rhumba
Tell Me Tonight
The Sea of the Moon

About all we have to say nowadays about TM is: Here are his new discs! He's that hot on records.

★ **DOTTIE O'BRIEN (Capitol)**

Tear It Down

An attempt to imitate Clyde McCoy's famous record of the thirties. It's not as good as the original, but, if you don't remember that, you might like it immensely.

★ **THE MARINERS (Columbia)**

How Near To My Heart
It Is No Secret
The Rosary
Our Lady of Fatima

The first is a beautiful ballad, with sentimental reminiscing, while the second has a religious motif, with advice worth noting. *The Rosary* and *Our Lady of Fatima* are also religious songs, done with reverence and with feeling.

★ **ANDREWS SISTERS (Decca)**

Guys and Dolls

Title song of the Broadway show. The lyrics are clever and the music is rememberable. It will probably live long after the show, which looks like it will go on forever.

★ **HERB JEFFRIES (Mercury)**

Basin Street Blues

One of the finest versions of the tune ever done. It shows thought, excellent voice, good phrasing.

Quickie Reviews

CAPITOL: Johnny Mercer has a cornball, well done in *Goofus* and includes some of the weirdest sound effects yet on record ***Jo Stafford is pleasant on her treatment of *It Was So Beautiful.*

COLUMBIA: Guy Mitchell has a great version of *The Roving Kind*, perhaps the best. It's a sea chanty type thing and well done***Benny Goodman and Gab Calloway each play their version of *I See a Million People.*

DECCA: Tommy Dorsey plays *Opus Two*, which doesn't quite make it the way *Opus One* did***Mills Brothers' *Nevertheless* is one of the best by Kalmar and Ruby ***Rose Murphy chee-chee's through *I Wanna Be Loved By You.* Back is *Button Up Your Overcoat****Sy Oliver's band plays while Ralph Young sings *Just The Way You Are.*

MGM: *Destination Moon* has suspense, sound effects, music, dialogue, good acting***Art Lund should have a good-selling record in his infectious rhythm tune, *Velvet Lips.*

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Stand-In For Romance

By DEE CAMPBELL

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Libby started out as a stand-in for romance, but she ended by playing the leading role.

LIBBY TRAVIS sat at her big polished desk and made doughnut doodles in a monotonous parade across a memorandum pad. The doodles, she noted wearily, were as dull and unexciting as her life. Each of them represented another day marching drearily on to the next, and, she eyed the latest doodle hatefully, they seemed to be getting flatter and more lopsided all the time.

She dropped the pencil and gazed despairingly at the ultra-modern glass door with the smart raised letters spelling out her name:

LIBBY TRAVIS, HOMEMAKER EDITOR
HEARTH AND HOME MAGAZINE

It looked very nice. She'd worked hard for that title and the swank air-conditioned

Maxine was obviously after Niles, and using every trick in the book to get him.

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office that went with it. But it took more than smart titles and air conditioning to make her happy.

"It takes a man!" Libby blurted aloud to the empty office, and felt so discouraged she wanted to crawl beneath the memorandum pad and hide there. "A man like Niles Calvert," she added in the tiniest of whispers.

Just saying his name buoyed her wilting spirits. She raised herself gingerly in the desk chair, and gazed hopefully down the corridor that stretched beyond her door. At the opposite end was another door just like her own, only the raised letters said:

NILES CALVERT,
MANAGING EDITOR

Of course she couldn't actually read the letters that far away, but just knowing what they said gave her heart little bird flutters.

NILES HAD BEEN transferred just last week from the staff of a national news magazine. Yesterday there'd been an introduction party for him in the associate editor's office. And the moment Libby looked up and into his gray eyes, heard the sudden deepening of his voice as his hand closed warmly and definitely over hers, something just seemed to go "click" in her heart. She had the confused impression someone had given the rug a hard yank, and that she was calmly turning upside down in slow motion.

Somehow she had managed to withdraw her hand, murmur something, and step back. Niles Calvert gave her a probing glance, and then, a flashing, heart-jolting smile.

Afterwards, she didn't remember leaving the party and going home. Her mind carried a single impression of questioning gray eyes, sun-tinged brown hair, and a smile that was like a burst of sunshine. And wide, wide shoulders. She remembered those particularly, because she'd wondered from the first if he entered doors sideways.

She dreamed about him that night. And he was right there in her thoughts in the morning when she had her coffee in the blue and gray kitchenette.

Now, sitting at her desk, her heart tingled with the realization that he was sitting just down the hall from her, behind that door.

She sighed deeply, and let her gaze go slowly along the corridor. Then her gaze stopped. So did her heart.

Halfway down the corridor was another lettered door, reading:

MAXINE MARLOWE,
BEAUTY EDITOR

Very slowly Libby picked up her pencil and made another doughnut doodle. It was the flattest one of all, and that was exactly the way her heart felt when she thought of Maxine.

Maxine looked exactly the way you expect a Beauty Editor to look. She was a liquid-figured, syrup-voiced siren, and if some day there was just one male who didn't instantly forget whatever he was doing and turn to stare open-mouthed when she passed, the world would simply spiral to a crashing climax.

Not that there was any danger, Libby thought wryly. She dropped the pencil, and put her hands together on the desk top. All the hope that stirred in her heart dissolved like an ice drop in a cup of boiling water. She remembered, now, that Maxine hadn't attended the party for Niles Calvert. That was the reason she'd been dopey enough to plunge heart-first into starry-eyed dreaming. Momentarily she'd forgotten that with Maxine around, she had about as much chance with a new man as an ice-cream cone in a subway rush.

Suddenly Libby stiffened in her chair. Niles' door was opening! She waited, her heart piling up swift little beats. Then defeat poured over her. It was Maxine who

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came through Niles' door. Libby made a little gasping sound of disappointment. Her heart thudded sickly.

Maxine threw a complacent glance around, and then came sauntering down the corridor to Libby's office. She opened the glass door, and approached with the fluid gracefulness of a wave sweeping over a smooth beach.

She wore a crisply tailored suit of pin-checked tan and green linen, with a minty green blouse. Her tiny feet clicked across the polished floor in tan suede platform pumps.

She watched Libby steadily, her dark eyes gleaming with interest. "Have you seen him?" she asked meaningly.

Libby kept her eyes on the desk. Something hurt inside her when she looked at Maxine.

"Of course you did though, at the party yesterday." Maxine slipped her hands along her slim hips. "Too bad I missed it, but I've made my apologies and he understands."

Libby's heart bumped with pain. "He does?"

Maxine's throaty laughter filled the office. Then her black eyes narrowed. She lifted a slender hand to the gleaming sweep of her ebony hair. "You like him, don't you?" she asked bluntly.

Libby went rigid in her chair. She looked straight into Maxine's amused eyes. "Yes," she admitted simply. "I think he's the handsomest man I've ever seen."

"At least you're frank about it." Maxine's dark eyes grew thoughtful. "That's a good sign," she went on deliberately. "I was beginning to think there was no hope for you at all."

Libby's head came up fast. "What do you mean?"

MAXINE'S HANDS were busy with a coin-thin cigarette case. "I mean," she said flatly, "that you're a perfect dope where men are concerned."

Libby felt her cheeks tingle with humiliation.

"Now don't get sore!" Maxine drew lightly on a long, corn-tipped cigarette. "You see, I've decided to help you. I knew you'd be interested in Niles Calvert. I don't blame you. I would be too, but there's a lad in Chicago named Brad Hartford who's got the screen on my heart's television set. I don't see him often; he's busy trying to make himself a fortune with a new idea in plastic housing. But he flies to New York occasionally, and we have ourselves a time."

She brushed the ashes from her cigarette, and studied Libby. "There's no reason why you can't get Niles interested in you," she said deliberately. "But you'll have to come alive to do it."

Libby bit her lip. "By that, do you mean I'll have to act more like you?"

Maxine's smile was cool. "Did you ever see me without at least one date on hand?" she asked succinctly.

Libby shook her head. "No," she said truthfully, "I never did." Then she met Maxine's dark eyes squarely. "Neither have I even seen you offer to help someone without a very definite reason."

Little sparks glimmered in Maxine's eyes. "What do you mean?"

Libby's voice was calm. "I mean there's some reason why you're so anxious for me to 'come alive', as you call it, for Niles Calvert."

Maxine's eyes got darker. "What I'm trying to do is give you a break," she said coldly. "Niles is new in town and naturally he'd like to meet a girl. I'm offering to do what I can to bring you two together. The least you can do is to be grateful to me."

Libby nodded slowly. "I see." Then she smiled disarmingly. "Tell me, Maxine, are you and Brad engaged?"

"Supposedly." Maxine shrugged restlessly. "But it isn't definite. I'll know next week. He's flying to Boston then to

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try to sell his plastic housing idea to the City Council there. He'll stop in New York on the way back to Chicago, and I expect him to propose."

"But you aren't certain he will?"

"I'm not positive," Maxine said, annoyed. "Why?"

Libby leaned back in her chair. "Thanks," she said crisply. "Now I know why you're so interested in seeing Niles and me get together."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," Libby said bluntly, "that your purpose is all very clear. Niles wants to meet a girl. You've already told me you think I'm a dope where men are concerned. So I'm just the one to park Niles with until you decide what the score is with Brad. If he proposes, fine! But if he doesn't, you'll still have Niles tucked safely away with me, to pick up again whenever you feel like it. I'm simply to be your stand-in for a little while."

For a moment there was silence. Then Maxine uttered a cool little laugh. "I've underestimated you," she said flatly. "I thought all you did was sit in here and write apple jelly receipts. But it's just possible you've got a brain in your head."

"Thanks," Libby said crisply. "I take it you don't deny what I said?"

Maxine's red lips blew a bar of smoke into the air. "No, I'll not deny it." She took a step toward the desk. "It's true I don't know how things will turn out with Brad. If he sells that housing idea, he stands a chance of making almost half a million dollars. If he doesn't . . ." She shrugged. "Since you've guessed my reason for bringing you and Niles together, why should I deny it? To be perfectly frank, honey, I know he'll be safe with you."

Libby swallowed. "I see." Her voice was low.

"But before you start getting all high and mighty about the idea, don't forget I'm trying to help you. You'll be in a position to have plenty of dates with Niles. Without me, you'd probably never even say more than *good morning* to him for the next six months."

Libby managed a little wisp of smile. "I guess you're right," she agreed slowly. "I'd probably never get a date with Niles on my own."

"That's why you need my help!" Maxine tapped her foot impatiently. "Now what do you say? Want to come along with me in this, or would you rather sit and stew in your precious self-righteousness?"

Libby's hands were clenched tight. The whole thing was so cold-blooded she could hardly believe it. Pride and common sense told her she should flatly refuse, but she forced herself to consider a moment longer. For an instant she remembered Niles' flashing smile and the warmth of his gray eyes, and her heart pounded. How could she refuse when it meant getting to know and be near him? Even if Maxine did take him away again, she'd always have those few memories.

And . . . her throat went dry . . . what if by some wonderful miracle Niles got to like her? What if the fragile dream threads her pounding heart was weaving so hopefully should be caught up by him and woven into the golden cloth of reality?

"Well?" Maxine probed impatiently.

Libby took a deep breath. "Exactly what happens if I agree?"

Maxine shrugged. "We'll start the ball rolling right away. I'll send Niles in at once."

Just like that, Libby thought, amazed. "But how could you?" she asked incredulously. "What excuse will you give?"

Maxine laughed. "That's a perfect example of how much you need my help. I can think of a dozen excuses. But never mind that. All you have to do is say the word."

Libby pressed her hands together. "All right," she said faintly.

"Fine!" Maxine turned, pushed open

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the glass door, and swung briskly away down the corridor.

CHAPTER TWO

Cinderella's Chance

LIBBY DREW A deep, shaky breath. She thought of Maxine's blunt admission that she considered Niles completely safe with her, and pain raked her heart. Was it true?

She slipped a small mirror from the desk drawer, and shyly looked into it. Wide, willow-green eyes looked back gravely from thickly curling auburn lashes. Her burnished auburn curls looked almost too young for her grave, piquant face. Her mouth, outlined in the palest of pink lipsticks, looked as soft and untouched as satin.

She thrust the mirror away with a sigh, and glanced up at the sound of laughter. Down the corridor Maxine was emerging from Niles' office again. This time she was clinging to his arm.

Libby placed a steadying hand on the desk top. They came on along the corridor, Maxine laughing throatily, her dark eyes rolling, her red lips flashing.

Sickening! thought Libby in disgust. But Niles Calvert didn't seem to think so. He was smiling down warmly into Maxine's face.

Libby brought her gaze back firmly to the galley proofs she was correcting. But her heart was beating in stiff little jerks of pain.

Somehow she couldn't concentrate on the proofs. Sudden anger flared through her; anger at Niles Calvert and all silly, susceptible males who couldn't see through a girl like Maxine. They let themselves be gobbled up by such a little trickster, and then wondered how it happened!

"Busy, Miss Travis?" A deep voice cut across her mental tirade.

"Yes, I am! And . . . oh!" She lost her breath, and sat staring up at Niles Calvert. "I didn't hear you," she murmured inanely. "I didn't hear you come in."

His dark brows lifted. "Ordinarily I carry a large drum which I pound on before entering an office, but—"

Libby bit her lip. A wise guy, was he? Well, he wasn't so smart or he wouldn't have started falling backwards the minute Maxine Marlowe flopped her foot-long lashes in his face! She glanced at him coldly, and kept her voice crisp.

"Did you want something?"

He nodded. "Miss Marlowe says she'll have some extra space in the September issue of the magazine. We're making up the dummy copy now, and I think we'll turn the space over to your Homemakers section. I understand you have a Fall Buffet menu you'd like to run."

"Yes, I have." As usual when it was her work being discussed, she dismissed personal feelings altogether. She assembled a stack of photographs, sorted them briskly, and arranged two on the desk top. "The recipes have already been tested by our research kitchen. There will be about a thousand words of copy. We can fill in with color shots for a two-page spread."

They discussed the article, and she noted with approval how quickly he adapted to new suggestions, and how promptly he spotted impractical ones.

"Thanks, Miss Travis." He straightened, flashing his warm smile. "I'm beginning to understand why you're so highly thought of around here."

She couldn't conceal a flush of pleasure. "Thank you, Mr. Calvert."

He stood holding a sheaf of copy, watching her. "You aren't at all like your friend Miss Marlowe," he said then. "You're strictly business."

Anger struck her heart like a whip. So there it was! She'd gone ahead sensibly with the business at hand, and he was criticizing her because she hadn't started rolling her eyes like marbles in a pin-ball machine!

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"Excuse me!" She snapped. "I was just getting ready to climb on my desk and do a toe dance when you came in! I know it's ridiculous to waste my time on this stuffy old work!"

His face had a puzzled expression. "I think you misunderstand me," he said uncertainly. He riffled the papers in his hand. "Speaking of Miss Marlowe, she asked me to tell you she'll be unable to have lunch with you as planned." He hesitated. "She mentioned how you dislike eating alone, so I'll like it very much if you'd have lunch with me, Miss Travis."

Libby kept her eyes on the desk, marveling at Maxine's ingenuity in wrangling this luncheon date for her. Something in her heart told her it was dishonest to accept; that she should find Maxine and tell her she'd changed her mind, that she wanted no part of all this. Yet to be near Niles, to hear his voice speaking just to her . . .

"Brother, that's editorial consideration if I ever saw it!" He was smiling down at her quizzically. "If it takes all that concentration just to decide on a lunch date, I'm glad I didn't ask you to do the town."

She felt that smile reach right to the tip of her heart. "I'm sorry," she said softly. She smiled at him, very brightly. "I'll be glad to have lunch with you, Mr. Calvert."

"Niles."

"All right . . . Niles."

HE STRODE AWAY down the corridor whistling, and she sat looking after him, her heart a quavering hodgepodge of anxiety and hope. Suddenly she knew why she had agreed to Maxine's plan. It was because she was going to take her advice, literally. She was going to do her best to "come alive". She was going to start acting just the way Maxine did! Just thinking of it made her swallow a little distastefully, but that wouldn't stop her. She would show Maxine whether Niles was so safe in her keeping or not!

She glanced around fearfully at the sound of footsteps. Maxine came swinging in, her red lips curved in a gay smile.

"Did he ask you for lunch?" she stage-whispered.

"Yes."

"Fine!" Maxine's eyes grew serious. "Now listen," she said imperatively, "try to make the most of this and wrangle a date for tonight."

Libby looked at her hands. "I'll try," she said stonily. "Thanks for all your help."

Maxine shrugged. "Forget it! Maybe you can do me a favor sometime."

"Anytime," she agreed weakly.

After Maxine left she turned and began clearing off her desk. It would soon be time for lunch, and time for her to launch her new campaign. "I'll probably make a miserable flop of it," she told herself nervously.

Unhappily, her prediction wasn't far wrong. The food was wonderful, but that was really a shame, since she might as well have been eating boiled shingles.

They ate at a little glass-and-chromium place with hanging vines in crystal bowls, and lovebirds murmuring in silver cages. There was nice music, too, but it wasn't the music or the lovebirds that made her heart tremble as she met Niles' eyes across the white-clothed table.

He stirred his coffee thoughtfully. "Your friend Maxine is certainly an animated person," he remarked.

So he was still thinking of her! She put her salad fork down with such a clatter he glanced up in surprise.

She flushed, and her heart took off on one of those roller coaster plunges it was having so much fun with lately.

"Maxine and I are entirely different types," she said stiffly.

He considered a moment. "Certainly are." And he poked contentedly at his sherbet dessert.

After that the conversation moved about

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as briskly as a prairie schooner through a river of quicksand.

I haven't done a thing I ought to, Libby thought wretchedly. And this may be my last chance! I should be laughing and chatting . . .

Niles glanced at her. "Finished?" he asked, and she nodded in confusion.

They were caught in the lunch hour rush on their way back to the office, so there was no further opportunity to talk. Libby's heart was laden with disappointment. There hadn't been a really personal note in the whole affair. Yet Maxine would have turned it into something as intimate as a rendezvous in a moon-bathed rose garden. Maxine would have touched his hand, adored him with her flashing eyes . . .

They were moving into the entrance of the office building. Libby took a swift breath and put her hand boldly on Niles' arm. He stopped still and looked at her. "Is something wrong?"

Blushing furiously she drew away. "No . . . no. Excuse me." They rode up in the elevator in an atmosphere of Arctic silence, and when the door opened she practically fled to her own office. More than anything in the world she wanted to cry, but she refused to let herself.

Luckily her desk was stacked with work, and she immersed herself in it, refusing to let her thoughts turn to Niles Calvert.

But presently there was laughter down the hall, and there were Niles and Maxine striding along, chatting gaily. Maxine's hand was on his arm, and her smile was gay and insinuating. Libby swallowed hard, and got back to work.

Then abruptly her door opened, and Maxine came flying across to the desk.

"You flubbed the date business," she said accusingly.

Libby sighed. "How did you know?"

"He just asked me to go out with him," Maxine explained smugly. "I told him I had to do something else." Her eyes gleamed. "I wasn't fibbing either. Brad called! He's flying to Boston and he's stopping off tonight. I think he's going to propose!"

"Congratulations," Libby murmured dully.

Maxine's laughter was rich and pleased. "You're not just kidding! He'll have a half million dollars if he puts this housing deal over. Think of it!"

"You're awfully lucky," Libby agreed.

"It isn't luck," Maxine said coolly. She bent over the desk. "Now listen. Niles is going to ask you for a movie date tonight, and for heaven's sake, try to keep him interested!"

Libby's heart took a little thrust upward. "How . . . do you know?"

"Guess," Maxine said smugly. "Now remember what I said." She turned and hurried out.

It was just before closing time when Niles came into the office, and Libby tried desperately to be calm and matter-of-fact as he asked if she'd care to see a movie with him. His voice was almost impersonal as he wrote down her address, and promised to pick her up at seven-thirty.

CHAPTER THREE

The Uninvited Kiss

SHE WENT HOME to her small Manhattan apartment, and stopping briefly for a glass of milk in the kitchen, prepared to spend the next two hours glamorizing herself.

She brushed her auburn hair until it gleamed gold-red in the light, but she couldn't help comparing it with Maxine's dramatic upsweep, caught startlingly with rhinestone combs. Libby sighed and picked out the brightest lipstick she owned.

She used it lavishly, widening her mouth recklessly at the corners, but when she finished her lips looked only a little less grave, and there was nothing at all she could do about her eyes. They looked back at her

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with patient sincerity, and without a single sparkle of giddy laughter.

She stepped away from the mirror, noting that the navy-blue tissue faille dress was lovely with the clever touches of kelly green at the throat and shoulders.

The look in Niles' eyes made up for some of the defeated feeling in her heart. "You look lovely," he said quietly, when she opened the door to his ring.

"Thank you." Her heart seemed to tremble at the warmth in his eyes. She took up the little kelly green wool cape and pressed the tiny matching turban on her head. "I'm ready."

His eyes were amused. "Just like that? You simply set the hat on without taking thirty minutes to adjust it?"

She managed a weak smile. "I'm afraid so."

I didn't even do that right, she thought wretchedly. *Maxine would have taken twenty minutes and he'd have been overjoyed to wait for her!*

As they went out into the light, early evening, the smoke-scented breeze was warm, but her heart felt chilled through.

It was a nice, funny movie, and afterwards they had grilled sandwiches in a little diner. But even though everything seemed all right outwardly, Libby knew the evening had been a cool, polite failure.

She sneaked a glance at Niles bent over his sandwich, and her heart went jelly weak at his handsomeness in his tweed sport jacket and neat bow tie. His eyes came up to meet hers, and she looked away quickly.

I'm doing it all wrong, she thought dismally. I ought to smile right back at him, and reach over and touch his arm! I ought to beg for a nickel to put in the jukebox, and then sigh, and murmur how much I'd like to dance. Then I'd be in his arms, and I could put my cheek against his shoulder . . . She swallowed her coffee, choked, and reached wildly for a napkin.

"Ready?" Niles asked impersonally, a moment later.

They rode back to her apartment house in a taxi, and the silence about them was like stiff, thick fog. It wasn't that she didn't have lots to talk about, but she couldn't help comparing everything first with what Maxine would say, and it always seemed to be wrong. On the other hand, she couldn't think of anything inane enough to giggle about as Maxine would, and so they rode on, and the silence got colder and heavier than ever. Libby wanted to weep. With each passing moment her chances of making an impression on him were dwindling.

The last grain of hope seemed to melt in her heart as the taxi eased to a stop before the apartment building.

Desperately, she made one final effort. She turned to Niles, striving to keep her voice steady. "Would you like to come up for a moment?"

He shook his head. "Thanks, I'd better not. You look tired."

So she looked tired! Maxine could probably have sat through two double features, spent the rest of the night dancing, and ended up looking fresh as spring flowers.

"I'm not tired," she said stubbornly.

Niles hesitated. "Well, I'll come as far as your door."

This will be my last chance, she thought wildly, as they rode up in the elevator. *Oh, I've got to make the most of it!*

They left the car and walked slowly down the hall. At her door, Niles paused.

"Good-night, Libby. I'll see you tomorrow."

She took a deep breath, reached out blindly, and caught his arm. "Niles, I had a wonderful time!"

"I'm glad you did," he said politely.

She held her breath and swayed toward him. "It was so nice," she whispered.

"Why—" His voice broke uncertainly. "I'm glad, Libby."

She refused to let herself think. She moved closer, and placed her head shame-

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lessly against his tweed covered shoulder.

"Libby." His voice sounded surprised. For just an instant he hesitated, and then his arms closed about her. She lifted her face. The little green turban thudded to the floor behind her. Niles bent and kissed her, and the whole world ground to a stop and hung suspended breathlessly, while stars fell in trails of pink fire and spun in dizzy spirals about her head.

Then gasping, she drew back, her face flaming with humiliation.

"I—I—" But there was nothing to say. Nothing at all. She turned and fled into the apartment. She closed the door tightly and stood trembling, hearing his uncertain footsteps go slowly down the hall.

"What must he think of me?" she whispered frantically. "Oh, what must he think of me!"

She crept to the window and knelt there, watching his shadowy figure leave the building and hail a taxi at the curb. Her lips still trembled weakly from the pressure of his kiss, and her eyes blurred with sudden tears. "I love him," she whispered softly. "I love him, and I haven't got a chance."

She undressed slowly and got into bed. Sometime in the night slow, sad-sounding raindrops fell upon the window pane, and lying awake she cried softly, remembering the hopelessness of it all.

SHE WAS DEEP in work at her desk the next morning, when there was a tap at the door, and Niles walked into her office.

"Hello, Libby."

She glanced up quickly, her heart skidding.

"Good morning." She was uncomfortable and embarrassed, but his manner was completely casual.

"Came to ask if you'd have lunch with me," he said easily. His eyes met hers, and that slow, warm smile touched her heart.

She swallowed. "Do you mean it?"

He took a step forward. "I certainly do, Libby. Very much so."

"I'll be glad to."

"Fine! I'll stop by for you at eleven-thirty."

He was gone with a flashing smile and a gay salute, and she sat staring after him, in a daze of happiness. He didn't think she was ridiculous because of last night! The knowledge changed her heart into a mad little music box. Niles liked her. He must!

At a little past eleven she slipped into the tiny powder room to comb her hair. She was wearing a simply cut business dress of lime-green with clever antique gold buttons, and a crisp, little-girl collar. It matched her eyes exactly, and deepened the glow in her auburn hair. She stood back, and touched her mouth, just lightly, with a new lipstick called Rosy Moon. She did look a little moony, she thought gaily, and a tiny laugh rippled from her lips. Everything was going to be wonderful after all!

Niles, waiting in the corridor, smiled his appreciation as she came out.

Outside the day was crisp and bright, and he slipped his arm casually through hers. Libby wondered a little fearfully if her heart could hold all her happiness.

They ate at the place with the caged lovebirds as before, but this time everything was different. This time she felt comfortable and happy and right. She refused to think of the night before, and of her ridiculous attempt to be like giddy Maxine.

Today she was just herself. And something in the way Niles' gray eyes smiled into hers told her that was quite good enough. Joy spun a little golden web about her heart.

And then out of the murmur about them, a gay, shrill voice broke through. "Hello, you two!"

It was Maxine, glowing and lovely in a suit of pearl gray moire, and a glossy corsage of coral tea roses. Her dark hair shone beneath a clever little hat of fog-colored

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straw, and her eyes were bright behind the tiny, misty veil. Libby thought, with a stab of pain, that she had never looked lovelier. Maxine's smile played over them like a spotlight.

"Do you mind if I join you? I'm really starved." She had already drawn out a chair.

"Of course not!" Niles sounded very eager.

Maxine sat down, and smiled radiantly at him. "I have a simply marvelous idea for my December feature, Niles! I just had to talk to you!"

Watching her, Libby's heart shrank to a tiny ball of pain. Maxine had an idea all right, she realized fearfully. And it wasn't hard to see what it was. Something had gone wrong with her meeting with Brad. Now she was out to get Niles!

CHAPTER FOUR

Fight for Your Man!

AS LUNCHEON proceeded, Libby realized with a dismal sinking feeling, that her impulsive prediction was only too correct. Maxine was obviously after Niles, and she was using every trick in the book to get him. She touched his arm, she waited daintily for him to light her cigarette, then caught his hand to steady the lighter. She smiled into his eyes, and practically swung on every word he uttered. What was more, he seemed to be enjoying it!

Libby sat rigidly, her throat so tight with pain she couldn't possibly eat. Seeing any man lapping up Maxine's synthetic charm would have been nauseating enough, but when that man was Niles . . .

She dropped her hands out of sight, and clenched them tightly.

Maxine's sharp eyes hadn't missed a thing. "Aren't you feeling well, Libby? You look a little peaked. Why don't you go back to the office and rest?"

Libby drew a deep breath. Leave? Abandon the battleground? What she should do was stay and do everything she could to fight for Niles! But she threw one agonized glance at Maxine's beautiful face, caught one shred of her throaty laughter, and hope was snuffed out like a tiny candle flame in a blast of winter wind. She rose miserably, not looking at either of them.

"That's a good idea, Maxine." She fumbled for her bag. "Thank you for the luncheon, Niles."

Somehow she managed to walk away steadily, her slim shoulders stiffly erect, and she got all the way back to the office before her tears spilled over.

She cried bitterly for a few moments in the privacy of the little powder room. Then she bathed her face with cold water, added a brightening dash of lipstick, and went back to her desk. There she threw herself vigorously into her work. She wouldn't even think about them, she told herself wildly. She'd forget that Maxine and Niles Calvert even existed! But just the thought of his name made her heart lurch painfully, and brought the sting of tears to her eyelids.

She slashed a blue pencil viciously through the copy she was editing. She absolutely would not think of them!

She worked steadily for almost half an hour. Then she glanced up at the sound of footsteps in the corridor. Niles and Maxine swung by, arm in arm.

They parted down the corridor, and Niles had barely disappeared into his own office when Maxine darted back out of hers and came flying down the hall.

"Libby!" She squealed, rushing up to the desk. "Isn't he absolutely darling?"

Libby pressed her hands firmly against the edge of the desk. "Is he?"

Maxine's laughter rolled out. "He certainly is!" She smiled down coolly. "Honey, I can't resist giving you just one word of advice. Don't ever walk out and leave a man with another girl. Not if

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you're the slightest bit interested in him. It's the worst possible thing you could do!"

Libby swallowed. "I see."

"I hope you're not going to be sore at me for taking a new interest in Niles. After all, you had your chance, and you must admit I did all I could to help you."

Libby kept her voice even. "What about Brad?"

"Oh, him!" Maxine made an impatient gesture with her hand. "He asked me to marry him all right, when he stopped last night on his way to Boston. But he doesn't know yet whether that housing plan of his is going to sell. Naturally I won't say yes until that's all settled. So I told him I couldn't possibly get away just now. He'll stop again on his way back to Chicago. Meanwhile," her dark eyes gleamed, "I may get so interested in Niles I won't care whether he does or not."

She leaned over and put her hand on Libby's arm. "You don't mind, do you? But of course you don't. If you were really interested in Niles you wouldn't have just walked out that way during lunch."

"That's right," Libby lied stonily.

"Fine! And now I'm going to give you a chance to repay that favor you owe me."

"Favor?"

"Yes! It's like this. Niles and I had a long talk after you left, and I got to know lots of things about him. Do you know why he left that news magazine he worked on? It was because he wanted to be on something with a more domestic atmosphere. You've probably already guessed the sweet thing is wacky over home cooking." Her smile grew very sweet. "And that's where you come in!"

Libby stared at her. "How?"

"It's simple! I can't cook a lick, but everybody knows you're an expert. I want you to come to my apartment and cook dinner tomorrow night. I've already invited Niles, and he's accepted."

Libby studied her. "And I'm to leave before he gets there, so he'll think you cooked the dinner by yourself. Right?"

Maxine laughed gaily. "I knew you'd understand, darling? Isn't it a priceless idea?"

Libby bit her lip. "It certainly is!" she agreed grimly.

"And you'll do it?"

Libby drew a deep breath. "I . . . I suppose so."

"Darling, you're sweet!" Maxine's eyes were bright. "Lots of girls would be catty in a situation like this. But you had your chance, and since nothing came of it, you're willing to help me."

She moved toward the door. "One of these days you'll meet the right someone, Libby, and when you do, remember one thing: You'll have to fight for him all the way, and with no holds barred!"

She floated away and Libby sat at her desk, a lump of pain growing bigger and bigger in her throat. She stared at the desk top, thinking hard. So she would have to fight the next time she met someone she wanted, would she? Her heart began to pound. Why should she wait until the next time? She had already found someone she wanted. Why shouldn't she begin fighting now? She gripped her hands tightly, and began to plan.

JUST AFTER SIX the next evening Libby rang the bell of Maxine's apartment. She carried a huge bag of groceries in her arms. Maxine had asked, quite casually, if she would mind stopping by the store to pick up the things. She would be too busy to bother, she explained, and anyway it would be easy. The meal needn't be anything elaborate. Niles, it seemed, was just a simple steak-and-potatoes man.

Tight-lipped, Libby had agreed to take care of everything. And that was exactly what she meant to do? So she needn't plan anything elaborate? Well, she was going to overlook that bit of advice. She *had* planned something elaborate in just the opposite way. She was deliberately go-

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ing to plan one of the worst dinners she could! She was going to begin that fighting she had to do by at least opening Niles' eyes about Maxine's cooking ability!

Maxine opened the door for her. She was wearing a blue terry-cloth robe, and there was a blue towel turban on her black hair.

"I've been wondering when you'd get here," she said impatiently. "You can go to the kitchen and get right to work. If Niles should happen to come a little early, you can leave by the kitchen door so he won't see you."

Maxine hurried back into the bedroom, and Libby glanced about the dining room. There were rose drapes curtaining the bay window, and a knotty pine table with matching chairs, centered before it. The tablecloth was pink, and so were the candles burning in their silver holders. There were pink and white roses for a centerpiece, and subdued music from a radio-phonograph. Her lips tightened. The stage was definitely set for romance . . . but wait until they started to eat!

In the kitchen she set to work to sabotage the dinner. It was a little difficult to bring herself to it, but she stiffened her shoulders and thrust her compunctions aside. You had to fight, Maxine said. Well, she was going to!

First she put the thick steak in the copper broiler, placed it directly over the flame, and turned it as high as it would go. She knew it would turn out dry and hard, and tough as a plank. She turned grimly to peel potatoes for mashing.

Thirty minutes later the unpleasant job was almost finished. She removed the potatoes when they were only partly done, and when she finished with them they had the lumpy consistency of badly cooked oatmeal. Next the salad; lettuce, thick slices of tomatoes, watercress, endive, and lots of dressing. Then she calmly placed the wooden bowl inside the warming oven of the electric range. She made herself leave it there until the crisp leaves drooped like water-soaked tissue paper.

She had just finished the whole distasteful job, when Maxine came floating in. She wore sweeping white tulle with glittering rhinestone clips.

"Is everything ready?" she wanted to know. "Niles should be here any minute. Now you needn't carry anything into the dining room. I want to do that all by myself."

She was interrupted by the telephone, and she glided toward it, like a queen on her way to a coronation.

"Hello?" Then her voice rose to an excited shriek. "Brad! Oh, you didn't! That's wonderful! Of course I'll meet you! I'm so excited! Just give me ten minutes. Good-bye, darling!"

SHE HUNG UP and swung around, her face glowing with excitement. "Libby, what do you think! Brad put over his housing deal! He's at the airport right now . . . he just got in, and phoned to surprise me! I'm going to meet him and we're going to be married! Think of it! He's going to make almost half a million dollars!"

Libby took a deep breath. "But what about Niles?"

"What about him?" Maxine repeated impatiently.

"Well, he's coming to dinner, and—"

"That doesn't matter. I'll simply tell him what happened. You two can eat the dinner."

"Oh, no!" Libby gasped.

The doorbell rang, and Maxine flew to answer it. Niles stood in the hall. He carried a long, ribboned flower box. "Hello, Maxine. You look lovely."

"Thank you, Niles." She was reaching automatically for the flowers. "Now, I have something to tell you." A little giggle rippled from her throat. "A fantastic thing just happened, Niles. I'm going to be married! I have to leave immediately, but first

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I have to tell you that I planned to trick you. Really I did, Niles! You see I can't cook a thing, so I arranged for Libby to come over and fix dinner. I wasn't going to tell you I didn't do it myself, but it's all right now. I have to run, but you can have dinner here with her."

Niles turned to smile at Libby, and his voice sounded completely agreeable. "Say, that's fine."

"Oh, no!" Libby cried. "It isn't fine at all!"

Niles' pleased look faded. "You mean you don't want to have dinner with me?"

Libby swallowed. "No . . . I mean I do, but not tonight—not here!"

He walked over to the table. "It happens I'm hungry as the devil. You must be an excellent cook or you wouldn't be Homemaker Editor. So what do you say we just put everything on a strictly impersonal basis, and—"

"Oh, no!" Libby broke in wildly. "You just can't eat dinner here!"

"Now, you look here!" He flung his hat into a chair, and crossed his arms angrily. "I was invited for dinner, and even though I'm not certain what's going on here, there's one thing I'm certain of: I'm going to eat!"

He yanked a chair and plopped down in it. "Well?" He waited, eyeing her steadily.

Libby stood twisting her hands, wanting to burst into tears, and too filled with anger to do it. "You—" she gasped helplessly. "You can't!"

Niles' mouth went hard. "Either you serve dinner," he demanded flatly, "or I'll go into the kitchen and get it myself!"

"But . . ." Then suddenly she knew it was no use. Somehow she managed to keep the tears stuffed back. "I'll serve it," she whispered wretchedly.

It was all she could do to keep from crying outright as she watched him try to cut into the rubbery steak. Finally he managed to carve out a portion. It made a dry clatter as he placed it on her plate. Then he took a deep breath, and prepared to cut himself a serving.

After that he spooned some mashed potatoes onto his plate, and tasted them. A sob almost strangled her at the look on his face. He shot her a quick glance, made a muffled noise, and cut a bite of steak.

"Ammmmm!" he growled suddenly.

That did it. Libby burst into tears. Her sobs echoed wildly in the room, and brought Niles to his feet.

"Libby! What is it? What's wrong?"

She twisted away from the touch of his hand. "You're horrible!" she gasped. "You know the steak is awful . . . you know the dinner is ruined . . ."

He stared at her, and spoke very slowly. "I was under the impression that I was being polite." Then his mouth hardened. "But even to attempt politeness in a situation like this is just about calling for the impossible. Did you concoct this mess?"

She was dabbing angrily at the tears spilling down her face. "Yes, I did! But I can cook! I can cook wonderfully well, whether you believe it or not! But I was a dope. I . . . I ruined this dinner because I thought you'd be eating it with Maxine."

Niles stood very still. "Why?"

Her tears were coming faster now. She didn't seem to be able to control them, or her voice either. "I didn't want you to like her," she blurted miserably. "I know it was wrong, but she was tricking you, and she told me I'd have to fight if I wanted to get my man—"

"Get your man!" In an instant his arms had caught her close. "Libby, darling, is that what you said?"

She nodded, weeping. "Maxine said so, and she knows. At first I thought I couldn't, and when I tried to act like her it all turned out wrong, and then, Maxine asked me to cook dinner, and I thought if I ruined it . . ."

Niles' voice was very tender. "Libby,

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Love Came Too Often

Jock stood there while Carol told her mother where she was.

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Could Carol lock love out of her life—when a man held the key to her heart?

By VAL NEWELL

EVERYONE IN SPENCERVILLE was talking about Jock O'Donald tonight. Even Carol and Betts, who sat in a booth at the local soda fountain, planning their futures vehemently, as girls do when they are nineteen with a whole bright future ahead of them.

"I don't see what everybody's yelling about," Carol said stormily. "I'd marry him myself in a minute."

"Well," Betts said dubiously, "I don't know. He's sort of a heel."

"Everybody makes mistakes."

"Yes, but not so many of them. Three wives is going too far—movie hero or no movie hero."

"They're only after his money," Carol said, pushing her honey-blonde hair impatiently away from her forehead. "They want to loll around in lazy luxury. With me, it would be different. I would have the future of the world in mind when I married him."

Betts said resentfully, "Now, don't go into your genius act again, or I'll scream!"

"Well, I am a genius!"

"Sure. You and Fragonard."

"Someday," Carol said with an intense dignity, "you won't laugh. Someday people will pay ten thousand dollars for my paintings. Maybe even fifty thousand. Maybe even—"

"All right, all right! So you're a genius. But we were talking about Jock O'Donald, not you."

Carol stared thoughtfully into the milky

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bubbles of her vanilla soda. She said, "Well, in a way, that's talking about me, too, isn't it? Because I've just made up my mind. I'm going to marry him."

Bett's jaw dropped. "You *what*?"

"I'm going to marry him," Carol said firmly. "I'm an artist. Anyway, I'm trying to be one, only being a file clerk in a newspaper office takes an awful lot of time. He's an artist, too, in a way. He needs somebody who understands him, as I would. And I need," she added, quite honestly, "a rich man, so I can paint all I want to, without having to have a job."

Betts said, "You couldn't marry a man like that. He's always getting into scandals."

"I wouldn't care. I'd go on painting, and let him scandal away."

"You wouldn't really do it, Carol."

Carol said calmly, "I'm a genius, and all geniuses have to make great personal sacrifices. Their art is all that matters. They give themselves to the world that the world may be more beautiful."

"Of all the tripe!"

A STRANGE MAN put his palms down on their table and bent over to glower at Carol. For a startled moment she thought he was drunk, but then she saw that he was only mad.

"Tripe!" he said again, in utter scorn.

Carol started to protest indignantly, but instead of saying anything, she merely forgot to close her mouth.

He was rather nice looking. He had black curly hair that would not stay in place, and made her think of a kid brother—if she had had one. But of course he must really be out of the kid-brother stage by several years.

"What makes you think," he demanded, "you're so darn much better than anybody else?"

"I'm an artist," Carol stated coldly. Then she added, to clinch it, "I paint."

"A baker is much more useful to the world, chum, in case you don't know it."

"What do you know about it?"

"I know Jock O'Donald. He's an artist, too. You just said so. And take it from me, honey, art stinks!"

"I said so?" she repeated hazily.

"Sure you did. But you were wrong about women. They understand him, all right. They understand him too well."

"Another crackpot," Carol decided aloud, indifferently. But Betts was making strangling noises.

"Carol," she gasped, "Carol, of course he knows Jock O'Donald. He *is* Jock O'Donald."

Carol began sipping her soda again. "Don't be dumb, Betts."

"He is, too! Take another look."

"Sure," said the man, with a tinge of bitterness. "Take another look, Carol."

Quite suddenly, without looking at all, she knew it was true. She almost choked over her soda when she realized it. Slowly, apprehensively, she lifted her eyes again.

It was Jock O'Donald, all right. The same hair and the same profile. The same slim figure, the same naughty-little-boy look.

She swallowed again, went red and then white, and said nothing. Her heart began an unhappy, dismal thudding.

He looked down into her scared blue eyes for a long time. He was bullying her silently, she realized, but she was unable to tear her fascinated gaze away.

"In order to marry me," he said distinctly, "You'll have to catch me first. And honey, I'm fleet of foot!"

Just to prove it, he turned and walked out of the place before she had a chance to put her stunned brain back into gear.

CAROL STARED at the automatically closing door for a long time. A beautiful pink haze seemed to be all around her. She drew a slow, unending breath, and thought. *But he's wonderful, simply wonderful!*

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She had no idea that she had uttered it aloud, until she heard Betts' sturdy retort. "Wonderful, my eye! With three divorces and an alimony suit. You must be crazy!"

Carol took a last look at the pretty rose haze that was fast vanishing, and came reluctantly down to earth.

"I suppose so," she sighed. "Did you notice his eyes?"

"Sure. I've read the papers, too."

Carol said with dignity, "I'm not speaking about personalities, anyway. I'm thinking of the artistic future of the world."

She sat there pondering it while Betts' sound lecturing went completely unheeded. The fact of his having heard her plans made it a lot harder. Anyway, Betts was right. The three wives might be too hard to live with constantly.

Still, Jock O'Donald was right here in Spencerville at the hotel. There should be some advantage to it somewhere, if she thought long enough.

She jumped so suddenly that Betts jumped too.

"I have it! The paper!"

"What paper?"

"My paper, silly. The one I work for. Maybe they'll pay me a good bonus for a story about Jock O'Donald. You know—something special."

"They've probably interviewed him already. Besides, don't forget you're only a file clerk."

"I don't care. I'll get something so special they'll promote me. Maybe they'll give me a bonus and I can quit for a month."

"You'll never get a better job that way."

"What do I care? I'll get some more painting done. I have to make sacrifices," she said, rising, "because of the future. Well, I'll see you some other time."

"Where are you going?" Betts cried.

"To interview Jock O'Donald, of course. Here, you pay for my soda."

She laid a quarter down on the table and went out, ignoring her friend's resigned look. Betts had no imagination, that was the trouble. She was a very sweet girl, but she couldn't see a thing in life beyond finding true love, and raising a family. Not that there was anything wrong with that, Carol conceded. But, by itself, wasn't it sort of futile?

JOCK O'DONALD was not at Spencerville's chief hotel. Furthermore, the hotel denied that he ever had been there, or intended to be there, though it was the only place he could be, since the other hotel was a little side street walk-up affair that catered chiefly to the bachelor sawmill workers and fishermen in town.

Carol looked over the register thoroughly, but could find nothing she considered indicative. She walked from one end of the dining room to the other, but saw nothing there, either. So she went back and sat in the lobby.

He came in half an hour later. Seeing her seated there, he glared at her, but that did not disturb Carol. She followed him jauntily into the elevator.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded.

"Visiting somebody I know," Carol said calmly, and inspected herself in the too-ornate elevator mirror.

He got out on the top floor. So did Carol. He eyed her suspiciously, and then started down the corridor. She followed.

"When I unlock the door," he flung over his shoulder, "don't forget to faint."

She ignored the remark as a lady should, her gaze spanning the width of his shoulders as she decided they could not actually be a yard wide.

She had forgotten that the hotel, in an effort to save a few cents here and there, had put runners in their halls instead of wall-to-wall carpeting. Her high heel slipped on the edge of the padded carpet and her sling pump, always tricky, twisted. She sat down suddenly, and with a distinctly audible, "Ooooooof!"

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He had the key in the lock and was opening his door. He turned to look at her, incredulous.

Carol felt her cheeks growing pinker and pinker as she sat there on the floor and rubbed her aching ankle.

He came and towered over her. "I see you're not the fainting type," he said grimly.

Carol swallowed sickly. Her ankle hurt. She said, "I've never fainted in my life."

"I know. You don't flutter, either. You're the artistic type."

Carol looked at the carpet beside her and said nothing.

"Well," he said, "have a nice rest."

And he went through the door and shut it behind him. Carol looked at it dully. There was a painful haze of tears in her eyes. She wondered if her ankle was broken, or if she had managed to tear a ligament. Ligaments, she had heard, were worse.

After a minute the door opened again. Jock stuck his head out. "Get up, will you?" he said crossly.

Carol swallowed and viewed her hands and legs helplessly, wondering how she would go about it. You take things like that for granted, and then one day you suddenly realize it's two legs you're depending on, and not one.

She started to move, and then sat very still and white.

He came over and picked her up. He said bitterly, as he carried her into the apartment, "This is why the O'Donald family have been suckers all their lives."

She tried to shut her eyes and relax, but she kept thinking: *Jeepers, here I am in Jock O'Donald's arms. What will Betts say?*

They were very strong, warm arms. They carried her over to the sofa, but instead of setting her down, they held her closer.

His eyes had a swirling blackness in them. He said, "Shall I kiss you now?"

"Wh-why?" she stammered.

"It would help if you wanted to sue me, and it will help even more if you aren't eighteen, yet."

CAROL SAID WEAKLY, "I'm nineteen, but please don't kiss me." And then, looking back into his hypnotic, fascinating black eyes, she said with a sudden, frantic urge, "Please!"

He lifted one eyebrow very slightly, and suspiciously. It made a peak out of it instead of a curve. Then he set her down full length on the sofa and tucked a pillow under her tousled honey head.

"You can recover now," he said coolly. "I won't throw you out. But I won't marry you, either."

"Nobody asked you to. I gave up that idea. The wives would be too hard to live with."

"I thought you were ready to make any sacrifice for your art?"

"Well, I was. But that was before I met you."

"What's that got to do with anything?"

She felt herself growing hot, but she had to be honest about it. "I found out that I—well, I'd be jealous."

He stared. "Why?"

She couldn't answer that one. She felt rather silly, stretched out on his sofa with him towering over like a giant Sequoia. She started to sit up, but a sharp twinge in her ankle changed her mind for her abruptly.

He frowned. "Look, did you really hurt yourself?"

"No," she said bitterly. "I just wanted a moment alone with you."

"I'll call a doctor."

"Won't it be too compromising?"

He said angrily, "Oh, stop talking like a fool!"

That shut her up. She did not look at him while he phoned for a doctor. He asked her if she had any preferences, so she named the only one she could think of who didn't know her very well. The family

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doctor had brought her into this world, and she couldn't bear to face him if he found her here. He would think she was a star-dazzled school girl, instead of a career woman whose purpose was an interview. When the strange doctor arrived he told her she had pulled a ligament, but would be all right in a few days.

He offered to take her home, but Jock and Carol said "No, thanks!" in the same breath. Jock said he would drive her home, while Carol was still thinking of the possible bonus her paper might give her if she could dig up something out of the ordinary in the way of an interview.

WHEN THE DOCTOR had gone, Jock apologized. "I'm sorry," he said, "for thinking you were faking about your ankle. I'm commencing to realize that you're pretty honest."

"No, I'm not. I swiped fifty cents out of my father's trousers pocket when I was sixteen. I wanted to go to a show with Betts, and was broke."

"Admitting it is honest, isn't it?"

"To you, maybe. But I didn't admit it to Daddy. I put it back the next week and he always wondered where that extra half dollar came from."

He grinned at her. After a minute, Carol grinned back. She was sitting up on the sofa now, her bandaged ankle propped on a soft footstool. Jock wanted to know if she would like a drink, but Carol shook her head.

"I don't drink," she stated. "I mean it—Spencerville as a whole doesn't drink much—so Daddy won't let me."

"Okay. How about a cigarette?"

"Spencerville as a whole—" Carol began, but he waved his hand.

"I get it. Quite a novel gold-digger, aren't you?" He picked up the telephone and told the desk to send up a chocolate layer cake with ice cream, and hot coffee.

The minute he hung up, Carol spoke. "I'm not a gold-digger, and I wouldn't marry you for anything. All I want is an interview for the *Evening Star*."

"No interviews," he said firmly. "I'm not even supposed to be in town. I've been sticking to this room like a postage stamp. I did sneak down to the fountain lunch for a minute, and was going to sneak out as quietly, when I heard you blowing your little horn. It made me mad. But it was a good lesson to keep my mouth shut and my temper bottled. Because look at what happened!"

Carol stuck to her original objective. "You mean, you haven't granted any interviews at all?"

"No. And I'm not going to."

She thought that over. She tried, finally, to explain why she wanted the interview, but he was callous about it. She tried to warm him up to the sad plight of the future generations who would otherwise be without her priceless additions to the artistic world, but he did not bite on that, either.

"No interviews," he said. And he added, "Orders."

"From whom?"

He grinned. "Cute, aren't you, honey?"

"But my whole future is at stake!"

He shook his head. "Not yours. You'll just try another scheme, that's all. Besides, what makes you think newspapers are as big-hearted as that?"

"I'm just hoping," she admitted. "I've got some money saved up, and with a little more, I could quit for a while."

Then she added truthfully, "I could quit anyway, but I'm supposed to pay Mom board. It wouldn't be fair not to."

"Do you want to play canasta, or go home?"

She looked at his dark eyes and lazy smile. "Canasta," she said faintly, forgetting all about the interview.

But the coffee and cake came just then, so they postponed the card game for a while. Carol tried subtly to find out something about his background, but he caught her at it with no effort at all and told her to try

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reading Louella Parsons for information.

They listened to the radio for a while, and then played cards for an hour or so. Carol kept trying to learn what she could, but the only result was that at the end of the canasta he was seated beside her on the sofa holding her hand while they listened to some Prokofieff ballet recordings he had brought with him.

Somewhere in the interim she had forgotten completely that he was Jock O'Donald, a top-of-the-heap movie star. And Carol had forgotten about the troublesome ex-wives, and the law-suits, and the notoriety.

ALL SHE KNEW was that he had an amiable charm, and a fascinating smile. He was someone who might have gone to school with her, but maybe four grades ahead. He could have lived in Spencerville all his life just as she had, and sure as anything she would have married him in the little old Plymouth Church down on Elm Street.

She wasn't sure just how it came about that he kissed her. It was quite unplanned. One moment they were seated there and the next they were clinging to each other.

It was wonderful. It started out casually enough, and then gathered momentum until the poignant intensity of it frightened her. None of the boys she knew had ever kissed her like that. She was thrilled, but scared. She pushed him away suddenly and stumbled to her feet. She couldn't walk away, but she could stand there with her weight chiefly on one foot, looking rebellious and bothered.

"I want to go home," she said, panic catching at her words. "Right now."

Jock rose. There was an odd stillness in his eyes. "I'll take you."

"I don't want you to take me. Where's the telephone?"

He handed it to her, and waited while she gave the operator her father's number. Jock ran his fingers through his thick dark hair a couple of times, rammed his hands into his pockets, and stood there while she told her mother she was at the Spencer Hotel, with a sprained ankle, and could Daddy please come and get her?

Her mother asked a great many excited questions. Carol answered each one dutifully, while Jock started moving restlessly about. She made the phone call last as long as she could, until Mom said Daddy was backing the car out now, so she would just slip on a coat and come along.

"They'll be here," Carol said stiffly as she hung up, "in five minutes. So I'd better get downstairs."

"Carol . . ." He moved toward her.

She stood quite motionless.

"Don't touch me," she whispered. And then she said it aloud. "Please don't touch me!"

"Don't be silly. I'll take you downstairs."

"Daddy will do it."

"Daddy won't get the chance."

He bundled her coat around her and picked her up as if she were five years old. Carol had no choice. She lay stiff and wooden in his arms, half of her not wanting to touch him while the other half was praying for the feel of his lips again.

"After all," he said, "I only kissed you. You're being childish. Or is it a matter of Spencerville-as-a-whole again?"

"I'd rather not discuss it."

"Well, you were planning to marry me a while ago. Did you think you wouldn't get kissed in the process?"

Carol cried miserably, "I said I don't want to talk about it!"

"Okay, so you don't want to talk about it."

He carried her out into the hallway and shut the door. He stood there for a minute looking down at her. Carol stared stonily at the red-lettered fire escape door down at the end of the corridor and tried to pretend mentally she was at home asleep in bed.

(Continued on page 104)

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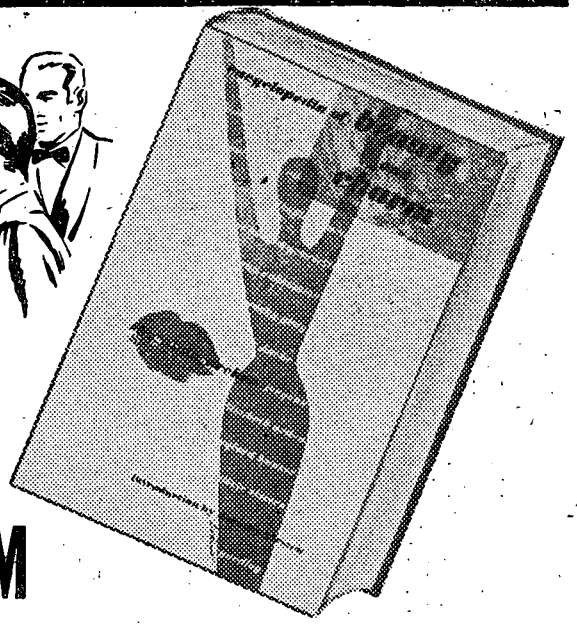

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(Continued from page 102)

Jock said calmly, "Carol, will you marry me?"

Her nerves gave a wild twitch. Something big and hurting crawled into her throat, but she got the one tense little word out around it. "No."

It did not stop him. He went on coolly, "Don't forget you're a genius. Geniuses have to make sacrifices for the good of the world. Countless future generations—"

"Oh, shut up," she said thickly.

"— will be benefited in an artistic way. Your personal life must be dedicated to humanity, or you desecrate the talent that has been given you."

"Tripe," Carol said, and then remembered that it was exactly what he had said, a while ago.

He carried her over to the elevator and pushed the button.

"You are inconsistent and irrational," he said. "You get yourself a beautiful plan, and then let one minor detail throw the whole thing out of gear. Don't you realize it's extremely unlikely that you'll find another chance like this?"

"Don't be so egotistical."

"I'm not, I'm merely considering the impersonal facts. But you aren't. You're getting personal about it."

He looked down at her. Carol's gaze was fixed now on the grilled elevator door, but she was acutely aware that his dark eyes were soft and warm. She could see without looking, the whimsical twist to his mouth.

"In fact," Jock said huskily, "if I didn't know better, I'd think you had fallen in love with me."

Carol said nothing. She tried to swallow, but couldn't. Her lips trembled wildly, and then she was crying miserably against his shoulder, her arms tight about his neck.

"Don't feel so badly about it," he whispered. "I'm afraid I'm in love with you, too."

"You and your darned women," she sobbed. "There've been so many of them."

"I can explain that."

"I don't want any explanations," she wailed, clinging to him.

"What happened to your nose for news?"

Carol lifted her head for a minute. What she saw was his mouth, strong and firm and waiting.

"Oh Jock . . ." she whispered, and started crying again.

HE WAS KISSING her when the elevator came. Carol was trying to forget everything else, but this time she just couldn't do it. There was too much. Every time he made love to her she would wonder if his three wives felt like this, too.

Going down in the elevator, he said, "I'll bet if we could fly to Yuma, I could convince you. But I don't think I could keep you convinced for the three days it takes to get a license."

"I wouldn't be your fourth wife," Carol said passionately, "if there wasn't a single other man in the world to marry."

"It just isn't done in Spencerville-as-a-whole?" he asked.

"It isn't done anywhere," she said, "without most of the world sneering, no matter how sophisticated you may think it is."

"You're in love with me, Carol."

"So what?" she gritted.

"All this, and art, too," he reminded her, winking.

"That has nothing to do with it," she said shortly.

"No?" He grinned, but behind it lurked a white-faced ghost of fear. "We'll see. It may take a little time, buit I've got a few days to kill here."

Carol had no answer to that. Quite without her permission, her heart started singing, *I'll see him again; I'll see him again!* Then the elevator stopped, and the door opened just as her mother and father were walking into the lobby.

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They were real, simple folks, her parents. They did not start asking silly questions. They shook hands with Jock and said they were pleased to meet him and would he drop around some time for coffee? Then they got Carol out to the car and whisked her home.

The third degree came when she was safely ensconced in bed with three pillows tucked behind her.

"Start talking," her father said with a pleasantry tinged by grimness. "What were you doing in the hotel, anyway?"

Carol told him everything, starting with herself and Betts in the malt shop, and including practically everything. They were quite patient and understanding until she came to the part about the kiss. Then her father started looking mad.

"And you let him go ahead?" he demanded.

"Now, John—" her mother began.

"I'll not have that shop-worn Lothario making love to my daughter!" he shouted.

"He wants me to marry him, Daddy."

"He *what*?" said her mother and father on the same breath.

Carol looked apathetically at their amazement. It did seem pretty incredible, all right. It sounded like something nobody in Spencerville would believe, except for the fact that Jock O'Donald was always asking girls to marry him, and they were always accepting.

She closed her eyes tightly and tried not to think about it. It didn't seem fair that out of all the men in the world, she should fall in love with somebody like that.

Daddy said flatly, "That's out, Carol. I won't let you do it."

Her mother added, "It would be a terrible mistake, baby."

"I know it," she whispered. "Right now, anyway, I know it. But when he's around, I start wondering. And he's going to be around. He said he would."

There was a silence. It grew longer. She

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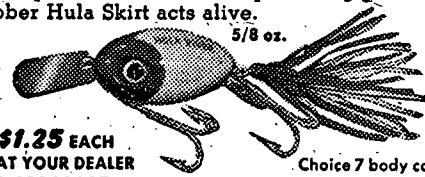
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opened her eyes, finally, and looked at them. They were viewing each other very thoughtfully.

"Aunt Agatha?" Daddy asked reluctantly.

"I guess so," Mom sighed.

And then, seeing Carol's dismay, she added, compassionately, "It won't be for long, baby. The man will have left town in a few days, and then you can come back."

Carol said nothing. The only thing she could think of that might be worse than going to visit Aunt Agatha, would be to find herself married to the romantic, impetuous, irresistible Jock O'Donald and his three wives.

Aunt Agatha was Carol's great-aunt. She lived on a farm, a good farm, forty acres of it. The farmhouse was strictly Victorian, with gingerbread turrets and endless porches.

Inside, there was an overwhelming abundance of horsehair furniture, embroidered antimacassars and gilt bric-a-brac tastily set off by a faded Brussels carpet.

Aunt Agatha was a bit Victorian, herself. She had definite ideas about things, rocked incessantly in a squeaky chair, and talked forever to anyone who was around.

A visit to the farm once a month, usually on a Sunday afternoon, was something that the family considered an obligation, but did not relish. And now here was Carol, stuck here for several days with a bad ankle.

Strangely, she did not mind it as much as she thought she was going to. Her aunt's endless monologues, no matter how boring, kept her from thinking about Jock. And when she found herself with an uninterrupted moment alone, she could always count doggedly away at the crosses in the cross-stitched Home-Sweet-Home sampler that hung over the marble mantel. But Aunt Agatha, whether intentionally or not, left her with very few minutes alone.

On the first evening at the farm, her mother phoned her.

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"Your young man has just been here," she said.

"You didn't tell him where I am, did you?"

"No," Mom said. And then added dubiously, "He seems like quite a nice boy."

Carol said, "Yes, and so romantic, too."

So Mom had nothing more to say.

On the second evening, her father telephoned.

"Hello, baby," he greeted cheerfully. "Say, this Jock O'Donald is quite a lad, isn't he? He's just been here and—"

"No sale," Carol gritted. "What is this, propaganda?"

"Of course not. I wouldn't let you marry him for anything. Still, he's rather likable."

"So was Casanova," Carol reminded him.

On the third evening, while they were having their supper tea before the fire, Aunt Agatha, who had been told nothing at all, started in. "Seems to me, Carol, like you've got a young man on your mind."

"What a silly notion!"

"Well, you're awful quiet."

Carol said crossly, "Does that necessarily involve a man?"

"When it's you, it does. First time I ever saw you when you didn't want to talk your head off. Besides, you've stopped talking about being a genius. Did you decide not to be one?"

She looked at her aunt uncomprehendingly. A genius? Then she remembered. She was going to be one of the world's few really great artists. She was going to sacrifice everything, even love, for her art. It made a fine theory, at least, for an adolescent girl to grow voluble over.

But when the chance came begging, even with love attached, she had turned it down. She hadn't made any sacrifices at all. She had turned the whole thing down for a dime's worth of pride.

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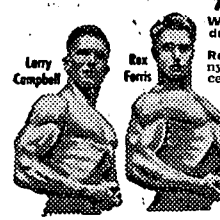

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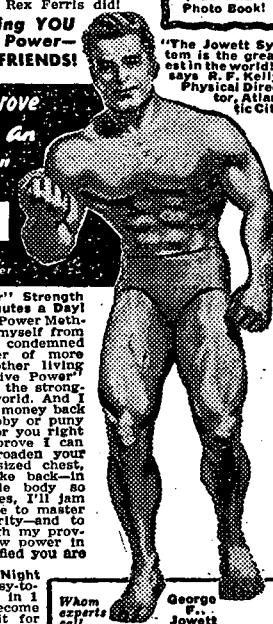

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Carol said, but her voice wobbled tragically.

"What about the young man?"

"What young man?"

"*The one,*" Aunt Agatha rocked squeakily as she crocheted, "who parked his car in the barnyard a few minutes ago and is coming up the steps."

Carol got to her feet so quickly her tea cup clattered to the floor before she remembered it had been in her lap. She picked it up hurriedly as her aunt rose to go to the door.

"Tell him," she said, limping toward the dining room, "I left this morning to visit my sister in Butte."

"You haven't got a sister in Butte," her aunt said.

"I have now!" Carol called out.

She went to the kitchen, where she washed and dried her cup and saucer, and put them away. She hung up the dishtowel neatly, in spite of the fact that her hands were shaking. Her heart was jumping crazily, but try as she might, she could not hear a sound from the front hall.

She put away the old luster teapot and shut the cupboard door. Then she turned, to meet Jock's steady, waiting dark eyes.

"HELLO," HE SAID QUIETLY. She stood still, as still as if she had suddenly looked down and seen a yawning chasm at her feet. Her lips parted, but no sound came.

He said, "You're hard to find. And your parents certainly play ball with you, don't they? I had to put the whole town on its ear until somebody volunteered the information that you had an aunt out on Cherry Road."

"Why?" she whispered miserably.

"You should know why. I'm in love with you, Carol."

"Me," she said, "and three other women."

"Just you." He drew her into his arms, in spite of her rigidity. "Why fight against

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it, darling? You really don't want to."

"Let me go," she said clearly.

"What about your art? What about being a genius?"

"Never mind my art and my genius. Just let me go."

"You could have love, and be a genius in luxury," he said, "if I really were Jock O'Donald."

She was motionless. *"If you really were?"*

"If I really were," he agreed, drawing her closer.

"Aren't you?"

"No. He's just remarried his third wife, by the way. That was what the fuss was all about. They don't want any publicity. So he made a lot of noise about coming to Spencerville for a rest, and sent me."

"Who are you, then?"

"His standin. Standins, my beloved," he added, "make no money, have no future, and are never heard of. If anything happens to Jock, I'll probably go back to being an architect."

"And no wives, darling? None at all?"

"None at all," he agreed, "yet."

She was crying a little, happily.

"Jock, or whatever your name is, I'm awfully in love with you. That's the trouble. I don't want to share you with anybody else. I want to be the one and only Mrs. —"

He grinned. "Mrs. William Elwyn Harris. You'll get used to it. Even if it's never been on a calling card before."

"Darling . . ." she sighed, "it's utterly perfect."

And when his lips met hers in a long, soul-shaking kiss, she remembered suddenly that she could start in being a genius again. Only this time it would be more fun. Because now she could be a genius at being Mrs. William Elwyn Harris instead of a female Michaelangelo.

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MILES NERVINE

(Continued from page 53)

He held her away from him and flashed her a reassuring smile. "That's nothing, Kate. Just a bullet burn. Red Gurlitz took a pot shot at me just before Sergeant Connor put him to sleep for keeps."

"You mean—Red Gurlitz is—dead?"

"He couldn't be deader."

She managed to say, "Then you won't have to keep on looking for the man who killed your—father, Steve. Red Gurlitz shot him. I—I heard him say it when I was in the car."

His hands seemed to be crushing her arms, then she felt them relax. "So it was Red," he said thickly. "If I had only known that five years ago . . ."

He drew her back to the bench. There, with his arm around her, he said, "You're pretty wonderful, Kate. Sergeant Connor told me what you did, and if it hadn't been for your quick thinking and pluck, I wouldn't be here right now. The sergeant and his men got there just in the nick of time. So I guess Doreen and I owe you about everything."

Katherine felt her cheeks flaming. "Please, Steve. Don't make me out a heroine. I was scared to death, and I never want to feel that way again. I just want to feel the way I do now—like a girl who has found herself and the most beautiful thing in life."

"Could it be love, Kate? His voice was husky, his face very, very close to hers.

"Yes, it could be love, Steve," she murmured.

"It's in your eyes now, my sweet."

"Yes, Steve. I—I guess it gets around, everywhere. That's love, my darling. And now I know I need you—like you and Doreen need me and—"

She couldn't finish because Steve's arms were crushing her against his pounding breast, and his lips were claiming hers in a tender, beautiful kiss.

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(Continued from page 95)

honey, you're a dope!" He bent down and kissed her, full on the mouth.

"You got your man, honey, the moment I saw you at that office party. I knew the instant you raised your sweet, serious little face, you were it for me!" He drew back and stared at her questioningly. "But I could never get to first base with you. Every time we were together you just seemed to curl up inside yourself. I even put up with Maxine's silly chatter because she seemed eager to help me date you."

"You . . . you think Maxine is silly?" she whispered tremulously.

"Her head's full of sand to the eyebrows," Niles said flatly. "Even so, I thought she might help me. That's why I pretended to go for her during lunch today. I was getting desperate. I thought if I could just make you show some sign of jealousy, it would at least be an encouragement. But you simply got up and left. Then Maxine asked me here to dinner, and I thought maybe she'd give me a lead on you—drop some hint about how I could make you like me."

She nestled deep in his arms, and raised starry eyes. "Oh, don't you see, Niles? Maxine told me I should act more like her. I'm not her type at all, but I knew she always had plenty of dates, so I decided to try it. Only I just couldn't. That's why I seemed to freeze up with you all the time."

His gray eyes were lighted with laughter. "Is that the reason you angled for that kiss the other night, and then turned into an icicle when you got it?"

She nodded shyly. "I . . . I'm afraid so." She drew a quavery little breath. "But we could . . . well, sort of make up for it now, couldn't we?"

Niles nodded, very emphatically. "We certainly could!" He bent his lips to hers, and somehow they forgot all about eating dinner.

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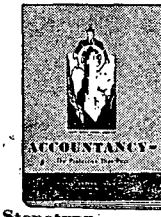

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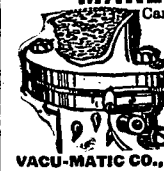

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(Continued from page 8)

Chest: Carry your chest high. Don't throw your chest out—or your entire body will go out of kilter. "Sway-back" will result as well. Raise your chest until it hurts. Then slowly relax the chest muscles until you feel comfortable, but your chest is still high.

Shoulders and Shoulder Blades: Carry your shoulders relaxed, broad and low. Never back! The old command, "Throw your shoulders back," has ruined many an otherwise good body line-up. Here's a simple check for your shoulders. Chest high. Rotate your shoulders up as high toward your ears as you can get them, back a little, and then let them drop. This last position is approximately how you should carry your shoulders.

Head and Neck: So long as your head is set squarely over your chest, your chest is over your pelvis, and your pelvis is balanced over the balls of your feet, your body will be in correct lineup. And it may help you to carry your head and neck gracefully if you think of yourself as sitting, standing and walking really TALL. Or think of pushing your neck up behind your ears. If these suggestions fail, at least push your neck back and think of carrying your head balanced straight on your neck.

Now that you know how to achieve the ultimate in proper carriage and feminine grace, you may say, "But there's something wrong somewhere, because these things don't come easily to me."

And you may be right. In which case you require some corrective exercises to put yourself in shape.

These are designed to relax back muscles as well as others in your body lineup which have to do with improved posture:

Shoulder Slump: Sit on chair, feet flat on floor, hands relaxed in lap, head lolling forward, body slumped. Now, slowly straighten up so that your head is erect, chin in, shoulders back, abdomen in, back

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straight. Hold position for a moment, then slump back to original position. R-e-l-a-x. Repeat five times.

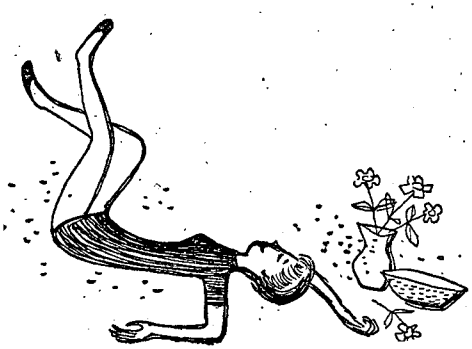
Shoulder Circles: Sit on edge of chair with feet flat on floor, body erect. Now place your finger tips on your shoulders and with elbows out at sides describe a wide circle, moving elbows backward, up, forward and back to sides. Describe four complete circles. R-e-l-a-x. Describe four more.

Leg Stretch: Stand at a distance of two feet in front of a sturdy table. Lean forward to support weight with hands holding edge of table. Keep feet and legs together, knees stiff, and without lifting heels from floor, lean as far forward as possible. Return to first position. R-e-l-a-x. Repeat eight times.

For the Back: Get down on all fours with back flat and chin down. Now curve your back up so that it forms an arch. Return to original position. Do this exercise ten times.

For the Back and Neat Head Alignment: Sit on floor with knees up to chest, feet flat on floor, arms hugging knees, head resting on knees, and back curved. Pull with hands against knees and straighten back and lift head high. Hold position to the count of ten and then return to first position to relax. Repeat fifteen times.

Now go to it—and see if the above tips on grace and corrective exercises don't lift your morale—as well as your looks.



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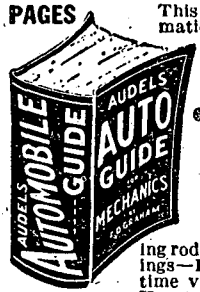

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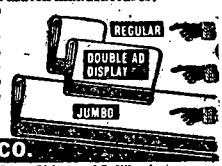

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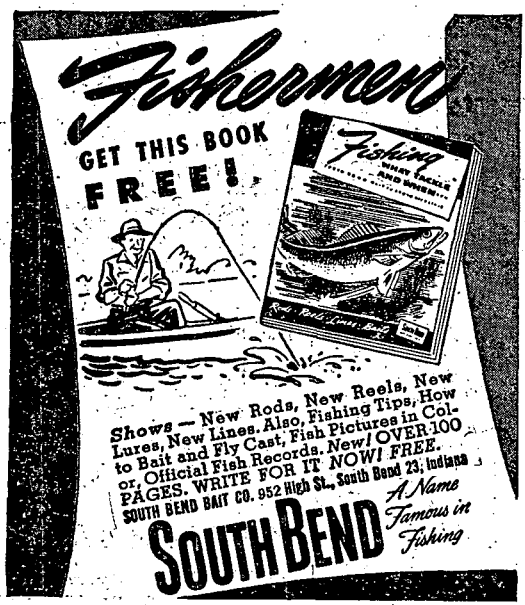
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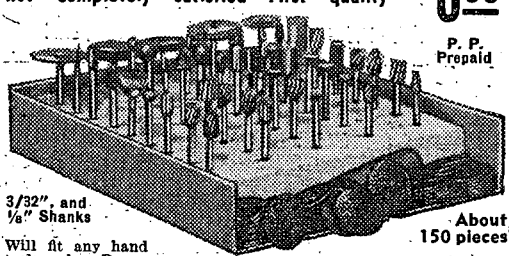

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NEW LOVE MAGAZINE

(Continued from page 6)

Since then I've always written, except for a few brief periods. We have been to Florida and back many times and hope to return to stay even though we're in New Jersey now. I love the warmth of Florida, the friendliness of the people, the flowers and the white sailing clouds in the bright blue sky. It's easy to smile there.

"This last time we lived in our aunt's winter home. Some of our neighbors were story-book girls come to life. Two of them were with us a great deal of the time—an adorable baton twirler who has ambitions to go on the stage, and a junior at the University of Florida who, though a local "beauty queen," wants to write. They brought us their beaux, their troubles, their pets, their glamorous clothes for a preview. All the neighbors came to us for everything from a cup of coffee to a sunlamp, and when we left this time, one fine man told us: "Hurry back soon because we've come to love you."

"Does all that show anything? I am really a simple person—trusting, optimistic, living happily and adjusting myself as quickly as possible to the changes that seem to be my fate. I like order, old things, stability, or think I do. I like music, the theater, books, rain on the roof, the woods. I like people and harmony among people, and in colors and in living. One of the reasons my marriage has endured is that my husband and I treat each other as friends, though we are both incurably sentimental at heart.

"That's about all, except add the fact that I've been dubbed "a good sport" by the most unexpected people, and have sometimes been called "charming" because I'm a good listener. And my brother thinks the answer to everything will be solved when he tells me, "Just smile!" Add all this to my dreaming, and you have me."

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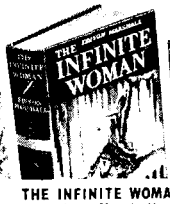

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